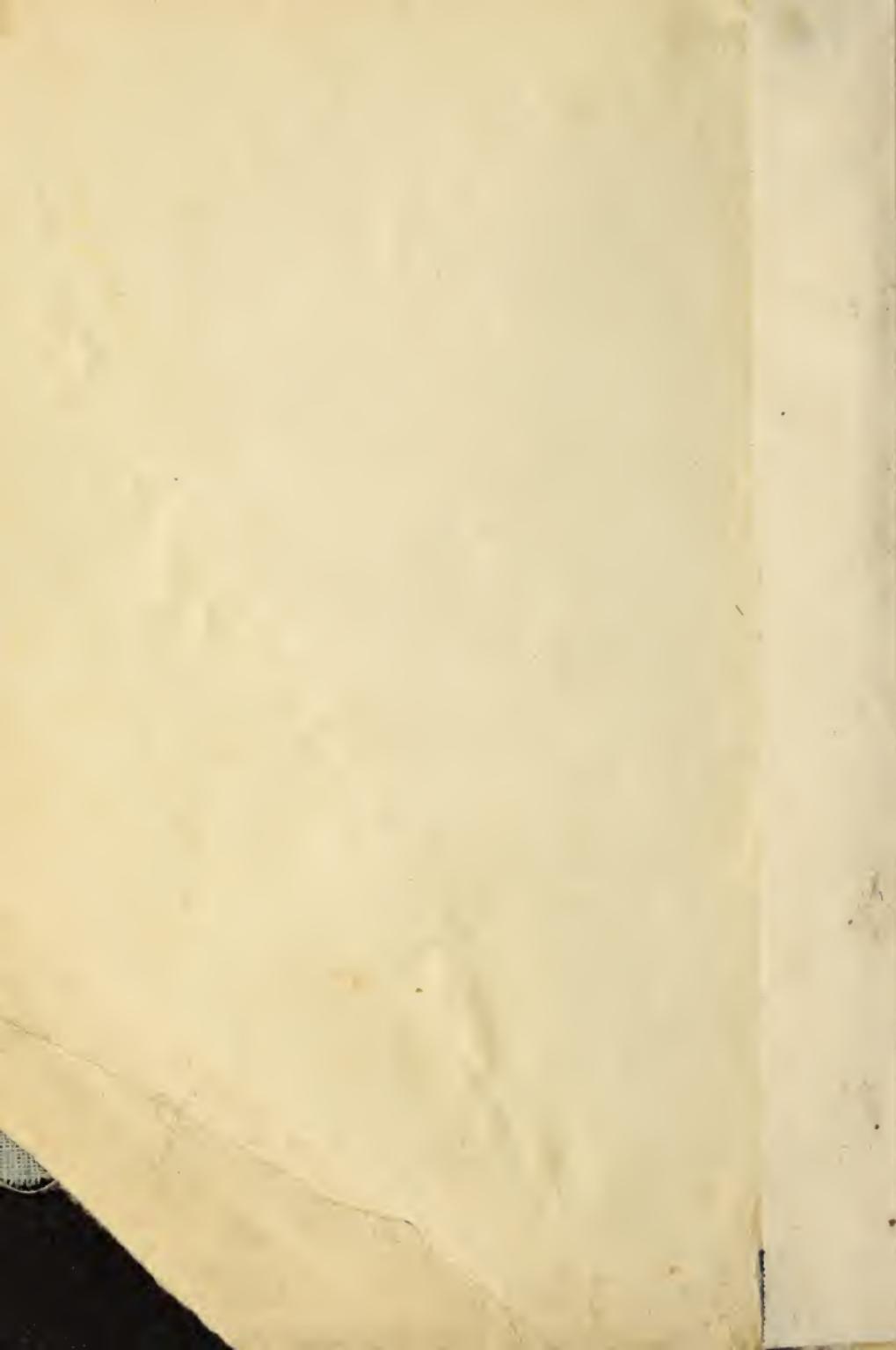


BOYS AND GIRLS
OF
OTHER DAYS

JOHN FINNEMORE



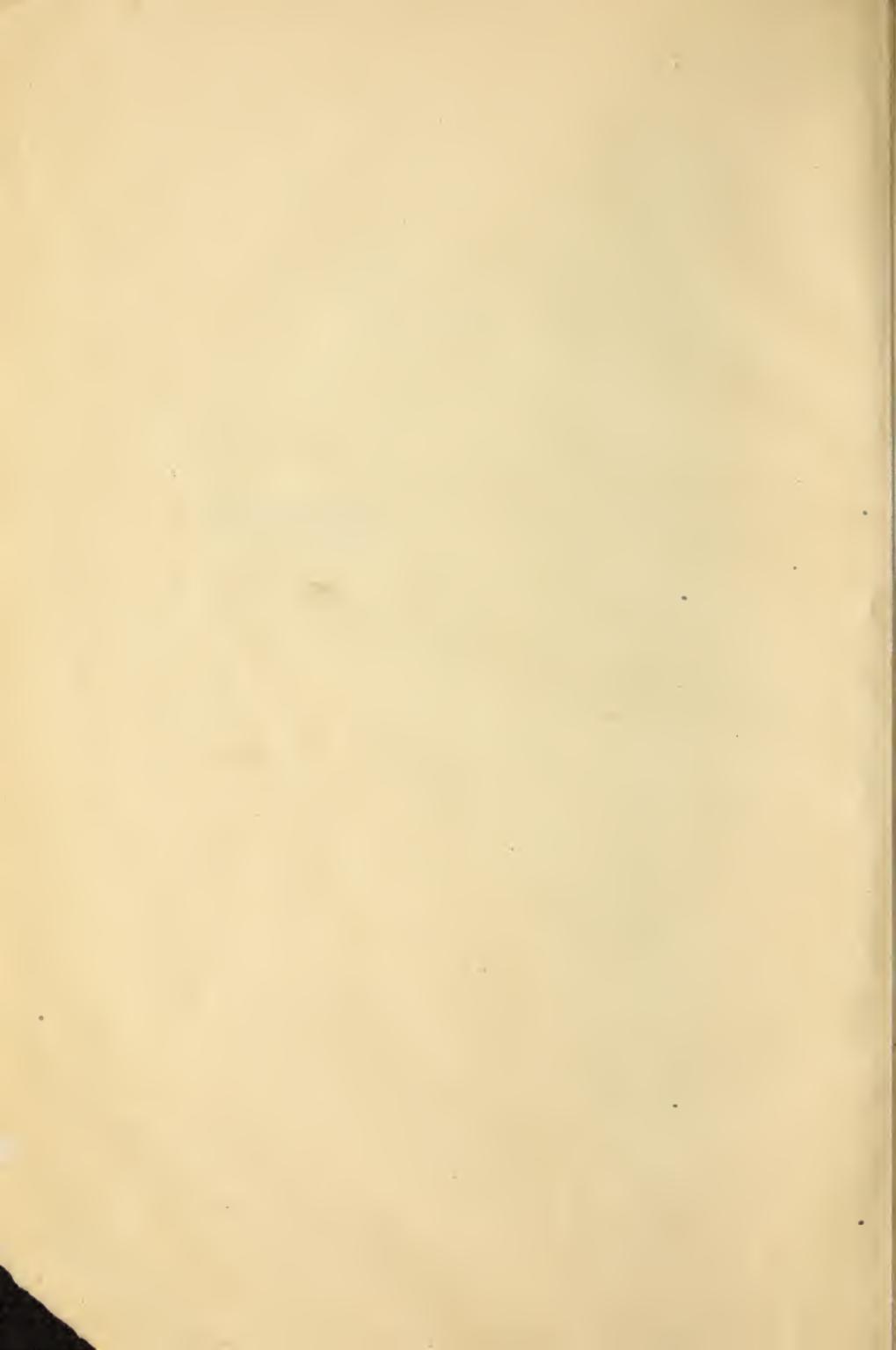
PART I
FROM THE STONE AGE
TO THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS



1930

DISCARD

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BOYS AND GIRLS OF OTHER DAYS
PART I.



BRITONS IN A "DUG-OUT" BOAT.

From the picture by A. Forestier in the London Museum. By courtesy of the Keeper.

The "dug-out" boat is similar to that exhibited in the basement of the London Museum. The helmet is a copy of the horned helmet (now in the British Museum) which was found in the Thames near Waterloo Bridge. The shield is drawn from a bronze shield (also found in the Thames) now in the British Museum. (See p. xi.)

BOYS AND GIRLS OF OTHER DAYS

By

JOHN FINNEMORE

Author of "Social Life in England," "Famous Englishmen," etc.

~~RECORD~~

PART I.

FROM THE STONE AGE TO THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

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PREFACE.

THE author's aims have been to provide a book which can be studied by children themselves, and to combat the tendency of young pupils to regard the people of the distant past as mere abstractions and not of like flesh and blood with themselves.

To enable young readers to benefit as fully as possible by the use of the book, exercises and questions have been added at the end. References are given in all cases to the text, pictures, or maps on which they are based, so that pupils should be able to answer them with but little assistance from their teachers. It is suggested that all answers should be written.

The second aim is dealt with by giving life and colour to the relation of the deeds of famous Englishmen and the social life of the people by a series of historical stories in which a boy or girl takes a share in the events of his or her time. An effort has been made to make the past live, and to represent events in our history by setting down the adventures of young people who saw or were influenced by the deeds of great men.

In order to strengthen the thread of history and to place the stories in true historical perspective, brief surveys of periods not treated in the stories have been added at the end of each chapter. Great attention has also been paid to this in the selection of pictures and diagrams for the recapitulatory exercises at the end of the book.

Boys and Girls of Other Days is published in three parts :

- I. FROM THE STONE AGE TO THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.
- II. FROM THE NORMANS TO THE WARS OF THE ROSES.
- III. THE TUDORS AND STUARTS

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY	
CAVE-MEN AND CELTS - - - - -	ix
ROMAN BRITAIN - - - - -	2
CHAPTER	
I. THE COMING OF THE ROMANS	
A HOME IN ANCIENT BRITAIN - - - - -	5
PREPARING FOR THE FOE - - - - -	15
THE BATTLE ON THE SHORE - - - - -	24
<i>The Withdrawal of the Romans</i> - - - - -	32
II. THE COMING OF THE SOUTH SAXONS	
HOW SERMAT FIRED THE BEACON - - - - -	34
THE FALL OF ANDERIDA - - - - -	48
<i>Saxon Settlement</i> - - - - -	62
III. ALFRED AND THE DANES	
THE STRANGER - - - - -	65
THE KING - - - - -	76
THE DANES - - - - -	86
<i>From Alfred to Ethelred the Unready</i> - - - - -	98
IV. ST. BRICE'S DAY	
AN OLD ENGLISH HOME - - - - -	100
HOW ELGITRA RODE TO UBBESTON - - - - -	107
HOW ELGITRA FARED AT UBBESTON - - - - -	119
<i>Events Leading up to Hastings</i> - - - - -	130
EXERCISES	
CAVE-MEN, CELTS, AND ROMAN BRITAIN - - - - -	133
ANGLES, SAXONS, AND JUTES - - - - -	135
VIKINGS, DANES OR NORTHMEN - - - - -	136

65
6/0
13/1

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. BRITONS IN A "DUG-OUT" BOAT	<i>Frontispiece</i>	PAGE
2. A CAVE-MAN	-	viii
3. FLINT ARROW-HEADS AND A CELT	-	x
4. STONEHENGE	-	xii
5. A CHARIOT	-	xii
6. A ROMAN GALLEY	-	xii
7. PHENICIANS TRADING WITH EARLY BRITONS	-	1
8. MAP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE	-	2
9. A MARKET-PLACE IN ROMAN LONDON	-	3
10. THE FIRST METAL-WORKERS	-	4
11. FELTOR KILLS HIS FIRST STAG	-	10
12. A ROMAN GALLEY	-	13
13. HOW FELTOR SAVED HIS FATHER	-	29
14. ROMAN SOLDIERS	-	33
15. SERMAT PASSED THEM LIKE THE WIND	-	45
16. WATCHING THE BATTLE IN THE GATE	-	55
17. KING ALFRED LEARNING TO READ	-	64
18. ALFRED THE GREAT	-	77
19. KING ALFRED TRANSLATING	-	97
20. STATUE TO KING ALFRED AT WANTAGE	-	99
21. ELGITHA AND THE SAXONS	-	127
22. HAROLD TRYING TO PULL THE ARROW FROM HIS EYE	-	132
23. ARRIVAL OF SAXONS BEFORE DESERTED LONDON	-	135
24. CHAIR OF ST. AUGUSTINE	-	135
25. MAP SHOWING SETTLEMENTS OF THE ANGLES, SAXONS, AND JUTES	-	136
26. A DANISH WAR GALLEY	-	136
27. A VIKING	-	137



A CAVE-MAN.

From the picture by S. H. Vedder.

The tools and weapons of the Cave-men were of bone or chipped stone. They had not discovered the use of metals. The period in which they lived is known as the Stone Age.

INTRODUCTORY CAVE-MEN AND CELTS

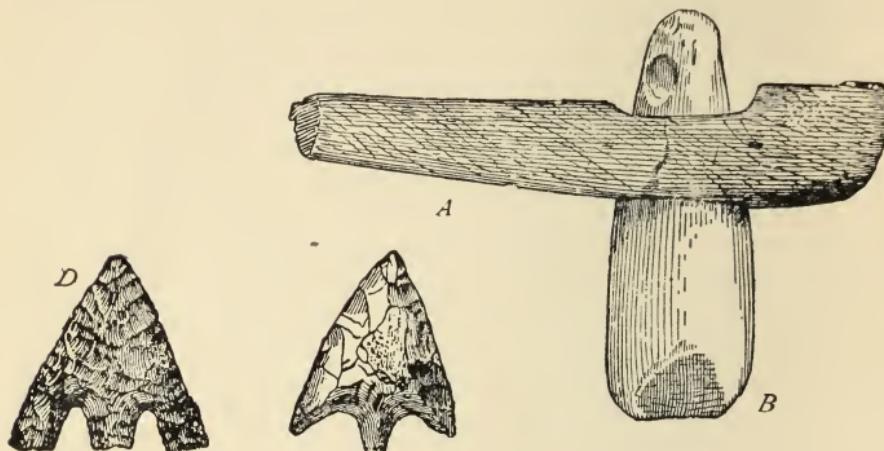
In the far distant past, many thousands of years ago, the lands now known as the British Islands were part of the mainland of Western Europe, which then extended out into the Atlantic Ocean about fifty miles beyond our present island home. The North Sea, the Irish Sea, and the English Channel were then valleys through which ran huge European rivers.

The earliest dwellers in the land belong to what is known as the *Old Stone Age*. They had not yet learnt to grind stone, and used only roughly chipped weapons. We know very little of the history of this period, but markings on rocks, deposits of stone, and other signs tell us that many thousands of years ago the climate of Northern Europe must have grown much colder, so cold that the greater part of the land was covered with sheets of ice.

Again, at a much later period the climate of Northern Europe gradually grew warmer, the ice melted, and the land sank several hundred feet. The lower parts were flooded, but the higher parts remained standing out above the sea. Thus were formed islands which were afterwards known as the British Islands.

Then, perhaps as long ago as 10,000 years, a short, hairy, dark-haired race of men crossed the Channel and settled here. They lived by hunting, fishing, on berries they found in the woods, and on roots. They are known as

Cave-men, because they dwelt in caves. We do know something of this race, as from time to time rude weapons and tools have been found in caves and graves which have been unearthed.



STONE AGE.

B Flint arrow-heads (Yorkshire Wolds) *B*, Polished celt with original handle (Cumberland). (After Sir John Evans.)

The Cave-men lived almost in the lowest stage of savagery, and we speak of them as belonging to the *Stone Age*, because most of their weapons and utensils were made of stone. The art of extracting metals from ores was unknown to them. From remains which have been found we know that they had small brains, but they must have been very cunning, or they would have fared badly with their crude weapons against the wild animals which prowled in the forests.

At first the greater part of their time was spent in hunting for food. When they were successful in getting enough to last over a few days they took a holiday ; but sometimes they were unfortunate and must have felt very hungry.

Later on they kept flocks. Then they grew wise enough to sow seeds, and cultivated the land. When it was no longer necessary to worry continually over food they had time to think of other things, and gradually became more civilized.

But the Cave-men were never as clever as many races on the mainland of Europe, and soon they were to be defeated by tribes known as Celts, who in their conquering march westwards had reached the Channel. You must be prepared to hear of many movements from east to west. The history of the greater part of the world is connected with the wandering of races and tribes towards the west.

CELT'S AND THE BRONZE AGE.

About 800 years before the birth of Christ a race known as Celts crossed the Channel and drove the Cave-men west. These new invaders were very big fair-haired fellows, far more powerful than the Cave-men. They were more civilized also. Armed with weapons made of bronze, with better-laid plans of attack, they soon overcame the resistance of foes fighting with flint-tipped arrows and stone axes.

The new invaders came in two main waves: first the Goidels or Gaels; then the Brythons or Britons, who settled in the south. From these Celts the Scottish, Irish, and Welsh are mainly descended. We shall hear of the English later.

The Celts had made some advances towards civilization. They kept cattle, farmed the land, and made metal coins. They traded with each other and even with their kinsmen, the Celts of Gaul, who visited Cornwall in search of tin.

Each tribe lived apart, governed by its own chief or king.

Their priests, who were called Druids, were very powerful. Although they learned to use bronze, and later iron, they

were still savages in many of their customs. There is little doubt that Stonehenge witnessed many cruel human sacrifices. They tattooed in bright blue patterns their bodies with the dye of

woad, and were so wild in their appearance that they startled foreigners who, from more civilized lands, came to visit them. Such were the natives of our land at about the time Christ was born.

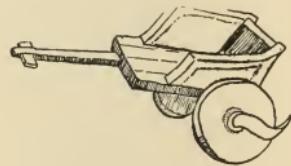
But people living in distant lands had for centuries been highly civilized. Magnificent palaces were being built in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece at a time when wattled huts were being erected in Britain. Phœnician merchants from Tyre and Sidon, towns frequently mentioned in the Bible, had for many years visited in fine ships, built from the cedar-trees of the forests of Mount Lebanon, our islands in search of skins, furs, and bars of tin.

After many great empires had grown up and decayed there arose the mighty empire of Rome, soon to be mistress of the "known world." Even Britain in the far west was to be added to her conquests.

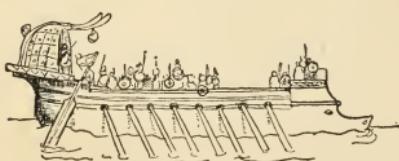
In 55 and 54 B.C. *Caius Julius Cæsar*, while extending the boundary of the Roman Empire, visited our islands, but he did not stay here or



STONEHENGE.



CHARIOT.



ROMAN GALLEY.



PHœNICIANS TRADING WITH THE EARLY BRITONS ON THE COAST OF
CORNWALL.

After the fresco by Sir Frederick Leighton in the Royal Exchange, London.

bring our island under the power of Rome. It was not until A.D. 43, nearly a hundred years afterwards, that Britain became part of the Roman Empire.

ROMAN BRITAIN, A.D. 43-410.

The well-trained soldiers of Rome soon overcame the resistance of the Britons. The revolt under *Boadicea*



THE ROMAN EMPIRE (THE PORTION LEFT WHITE).

caused them more trouble. Under this great Queen the Britons cut to pieces a whole Roman legion. Soon, however, Rome wreaked a terrible vengeance on them.

The Roman rule lasted for 360 years, during which period there was peace and order in Britain such as she had never known before. Just laws were established; the weak were protected against the strong; roads were made; towns were built; and our land became one of the richest provinces in Western Europe.



A MARKET-PLACE IN ROMAN LONDON.

From the picture by A. Forestier in the London Museum. By courtesy of the Keeper.

Notice (1) the fair-haired slave being offered for sale—the dealer is praising her beautiful hair; (2) the Phoenician trader on the left with his pottery; (3) the Roman civilian wearing a toga, or loose robe; (4) the Roman women at the stall; (5) the Roman soldiers.



PREHISTORIC BRONZE AGE: THE FIRST METAL-WORKERS

From the painting by A. Forestier in the London Museum. By courtesy of the Keeper.

BOYS AND GIRLS OF OTHER DAYS

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

I.

A HOME IN ANCIENT BRITAIN.

ONE bright morning—long, long ago in old Britain, little Feltor sat up from sleep and rubbed his eyes. Feltor's home consisted of one large, round room, with walls of great oak logs, their chinks plastered with clay, roof of branches covered with a thatch of rushes, and a floor of mud. In the middle of the floor a fire (of wood and turf mixed) was burning, and the smoke, driven hither and thither by the wind blowing in freshly at the open door, finally escaped through a hole in the highest part of the roof. The place where Feltor was sitting was a raised bench running all round the house, and upon this bench the family slept. On the opposite side of the room a heap of skins tossed aside marked

the place where his parents had been sleeping, but they were now gone. Springing down upon the soft rushes which covered the floor, Feltor ran across the room.

“Meneg,” he cried, “Meneg, wake up.”

Beside his parents’ couch lay his baby brother, carefully wrapped in a black bearskin, his bright hair shining brighter still against the soft, glossy depths of the fur. Meneg opened his eyes sleepily, to smile on his brother, then shut them again and nestled deeper into his soft, warm bed, while Feltor laughed, and ran through the open door. Here he found his mother, busy with the hand-mill grinding corn, and he went at once to help her.

“I can do that, mother,” he cried.

His mother smiled and gave him the handle of the mill to turn while she went to fetch more corn. Feltor ground away busily, and looked round at the same time to see where his father was. No sign of him could be seen about their patch of cleared land, hemmed in on one side by the thick forest, and on the other by a deep, slow river, nor could the boy see their two great hunting dogs, Bran and Lwyd.

“He has gone hunting,” thought Feltor, “I

wish I had been up early enough to start with him."

At this moment a long, wild howl rang from the forest and Feltor looked that way.

"Ah, ha, old wolf," said the boy "you would not dare to come so close as that if Bran and Lwyd were at home. They would make you howl in earnest, I know."

Then he turned again to grinding the corn and worked away with a will, taking but little notice of anything else.

Suddenly a loud scream from his mother startled Feltor, and, looking up, he saw little Meneg, who had escaped unseen from the house, more than half across the clearing, and toddling steadily towards the gloomy dusk of the thick forest.

"Meneg, Meneg, come back, come back!" shouted Feltor, leaping up and flying, swift as a bird, after his little brother, while his mother ran also with loud outcry. But what was that silent, gliding, grey form, slipping like a flitting shadow through the underwood, straight for the tiny figure? Both Feltor and his mother knew it for a wolf and ran swifter still and shouted yet louder. Meneg stopped and looked back on them, then turned in his gay mischief, and toddled

forward. Now, the wolf was at the edge of the forest, and Meneg was midway between the runners and the great shining teeth ready to seize him. Had the old, grey wolf dashed out at once into the open, there would have been no chance to save the child. But he lingered for a moment under the last patch of cover, while he looked right and left to be sure that this was no trap laid for him. He knew well enough how these people prized his thick, warm skin, and he was in no hurry to part with it. This delay saved Meneg. On came Feltor like the wind, caught his little brother and swung him into his mother's arms as she ran up, and the gaunt, grey wolf slipped back into the depths of the wood to look for another breakfast. Back they went to the house, Meneg's mother holding him tight to her, and telling him what would certainly happen if he ran away to the wood where the wolf and wild boar lay hidden, when a great barking of dogs arose beyond the river. Feltor sped to the brink and looked eagerly across. He knew the sounds well, and shouted "On Bran, On Lwyd. Good dogs!" Then he shouted again with redoubled delight for the chase swept into view. Beyond the river lay a wide open glade carpeted with short, fine turf; and down

this came bounding a great stag, his branching horns rising tall and stately, his smooth, dun hide spotted and streaked with mud and foam, while at his haunches, and gaining on him little by little, leap by leap, came two great hounds, their lips parted, their shining fangs bared for the final spring, their shaggy bodies almost touching the ground as they urged their fierce, tireless gallop

“He will take to the river. He must come this way,” cried Feltor, and running swiftly to the house, he caught up his bow and a couple of arrows. He had grown up with a bow in his hands, and his father had carefully trained him to shoot; but he had never winged an arrow at such game as this. He darted back to the river bank in time to see the stag take a huge leap out into the stream. Bran and Lwyd made a final spring, but missed their prey, and tumbled pell mell into the water at his wake. Swiftly all three swam across, and Feltor, touching the point of his arrow and finding it keen, fitted it to his bow and ran towards the point for which the stag was making. He was but a dozen yards away when the stag, feeling the sandy bottom beneath his feet, stood up and shook the water from him in a shower. Then he gained the shore at a single bound, when



FELTOR KILLS HIS FIRST STAG.

Feltor's bow twanged like a harp-string. Rearing furiously, the stag made three tremendous bounds forward, then rolled over dead, with Feltor's arrow buried deep in his heart.

“Down, Bran! Down, Lwyd!” shouted the boy as the dogs started forward, and the obedient hounds fell to his side at once. His mother came full of praises of his skill, and little Meneg came also and tugged at the hide of the dead deer while Feltor walked proudly round and round the great

antlered creature, scarcely able to believe that he had made his first great shot, and was now a hunter like his father. It was several minutes before the latter appeared, a tall man, with flowing hair and beard, running swiftly on the traces which dogs and deer had left.

“Come, father,” shouted Feltor, gleefully, “Come, I have shot the stag.”

“You,” cried his father in surprise, as he paused on the opposite bank, breathing heavily after his long run, and leaning on his spear.

“Yes,” said Feltor’s mother, proudly, “It fell to a single arrow.”

The boy himself was running to a little nook in the bank above, and, in a moment, had unloosed a coracle lying there and jumped in. Dipping a short, broad-bladed paddle in the stream, he had soon ferried his father across, and the group collected about the fallen deer.

“When I saw the dogs heading him for home,” said his father, “I thought it was lucky for me, but I did not dream of this. Come, Feltor, you have beaten me by three years. I was fifteen before I killed such a stag as this.”

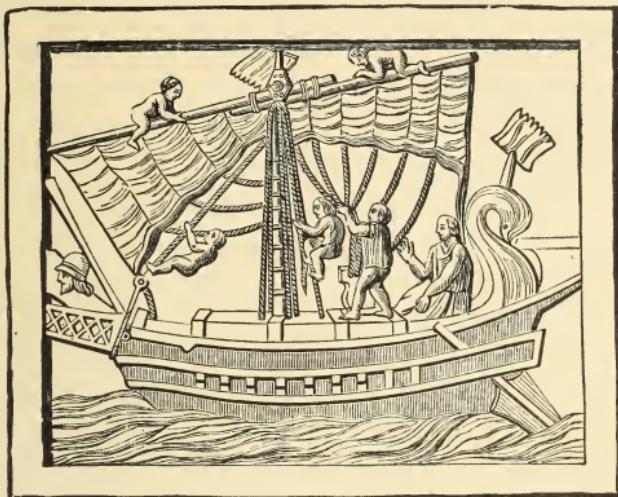
“I think Feltor ought to have the skin for his bed,” said his mother, smiling.

"A good idea," answered his father, "and it shall be stripped off at once." He took his knife in his hand, and was about to make the first cut, when he paused and looked fixedly before him. Feltor and his mother looked also, and saw in the distance, at the farthest point of the long clearing, a running figure. It was a young man, his head bent down, and coming on at the top of his speed.

Not a word was spoken until the runner came quite near. Then, raising his head, he saw them and flung up his hands, crying out, "The Romans! The Romans are coming!"

Everyone started, and looked eagerly at each other. The dreaded Romans were coming. What might they not expect? For some time the fear of the coming of the Romans had been hanging like a cloud over that part of the southern coast. The ships, which came regularly from Gaul to fetch the much prized tin, had brought news of the intentions of the great Roman leader. The Britons knew that the mighty captain, Julius Cæsar, was angry with them for the aid they had rendered to their friends, the Veneti, in Gaul; they knew the Roman greed of conquest, and how Cæsar was bent on subduing everyone to his will; and they knew that no hope remained to

them except to battle bravely for their freedom and their country. But of all foes there was none to be dreaded like the Romans. Sea or land, alike



A ROMAN GALLEY.

they fought and conquered. Had not the friends of the Britons, the Veneti, confident in their strong ships and skilful seamanship, laughed Cæsar's power to scorn and ill-treated his messengers, who summoned them to surrender? And had not Cæsar, building ships and manning them with Roman sailors and soldiers, utterly overthrown the powerful Veneti, slain many of them, and sold the rest into slavery? All these things had been talked of in Feltor's home, for his mother's brother sailed to and fro across the strait

with cargoes of tin, bound overland to Massilia, the modern Marseilles.

"I am sent, Beric, to bid thee to the council of chiefs," cried the messenger to Feltor's father. "A galley has come in with sure news of the enemy."

Beric threw up his hand in token of assent, and turned hastily towards the house. Feltor ran swiftly before, and springing to the wall above his father's bed, lifted down the small, round shield which, with a long sword, hung there always ready. Quickly girding himself with his sword and swinging his shield over his shoulder, Beric strode away for the place of meeting, Feltor and the messenger following closely at his heels.

II.

PREPARING FOR THE FOE.

FOR twenty minutes, Beric and his companions followed a narrow path cut in the thickness of the wood, then they came out on a wide, open, grassy valley, dotted about with houses like their own, and here and there yellow patches of corn still unreaped, while by the riverside herds of horses and oxen were quietly grazing. Passing through this pleasant scene, they went on up the hillside among the trees, and came out on the upland above. Here, they looked out over a wide heath with a white road winding over its dark face and passing below the hillock on which they stood. Along this road came a string of clumsy waggons, creaking and groaning, each drawn by four sturdy horses. In front came a burly figure, spear in hand, leading the first horse, and Feltor knew him for Sermat, the trader, who brought the tin far from the west, from distant Cernyw to their own coast, from which, on a clear day, one could mark the galleys passing over the strait from the white cliffs of Britain to the dim shores of Gaul.

"What, ho ! Sermat !" shouted Beric. " Go no further with thy tin."

"And why not, Beric ?" asked the trader.

"There is other work to be done by the shore now than carrying tin to ships," cried Feltor's father, "The Romans are coming and we must face them."

"Is it so ?" said the other gravely. "'Tis a terrible foe."

"Come with me to the council," cried Beric. "Thou knowest much of affairs beyond the sea and canst give us much assistance." The trader nodded, and gave a shrill whistle. Two of his men started forward from the rear of the train, and Sermat bade them turn aside the waggons to the village below and there remain until certain news came of the movements of the Romans. Then the trader and Beric marched forward, but Feltor followed them no further. Far out in the heath rose a great mound, covered with a thick, dark grove of oaks. This was the sacred grove where the Druids held their sacrifices and where the chiefs met in council, and Feltor dared not approach nearer. He flung himself at full length on the soft turf and watched the heath, dotted here and there with the figures of those gathering to

the council. Presently a patter of bare feet sounded along the path near Feltor, who looked up and cried joyfully, "Hanun," and a boy of about his own age ran up and flung himself down beside Feltor. This was his friend Hanun who lived in the house nearest to Feltor's home and was his constant companion. For a long time the boys lay and talked of the coming struggle, wishing that they were only old enough to be admitted to the ranks of the fighting men, when at last they saw a figure leave the council grove and run swiftly by the nearest path for the village below.

"It is a message to the people in the village," said Feltor. "Let us go and see what it is!" They sprang up at once and hurried down through the wood to the plain, but the messenger of the council was there before them, and his news had thrown the place into bustle and confusion. Some were harnessing horses and oxen to waggons, others were bringing clothing and weapons out of their dwellings, women and children were busy as ants fetching corn out of the storehouses, boys and dogs ran shouting and barking to gather up the herds of cattle and to drive the sheep and pigs together, while the old and feeble had sallied out from the firesides and were making their way towards a

lofty hill which rose solitary from the plain. The boys knew at a glance what the message had meant. The chiefs had ordered the non-combatants to take refuge in the "Dinas," the great hill fort, and away flew Feltor to tell his mother of the movement. In two hours he was back again, leading a waggon drawn by two slow-stepping oxen, and laden with food and household gear, his mother walking behind with Meneg in her arms. A rude track ran down the middle of the valley towards the tall, solitary hill, and Feltor guided the oxen along it. Soon they were in the midst of a stream of their neighbours, all busily engaged in conveying food and the best of their simple furniture to the place of refuge. At the foot of the hill they stopped, for the slope was too steep for the waggon, and Feltor and his mother, each shouldering a burden, went quickly up. The top of the hill presented a curious scene. Originally almost flat, a tiny tableland, it had been dug out and the cleared earth piled around as a breastwork until it looked like a huge saucer with shallow sides gently sloping inwards from the rim of the earthwork. A deep trench had been dug outside the wall, and, in the latter a narrow gateway had been left to be closed with a strong palisade when

the enemy should approach. The wide expanse of turf enclosed by the fortification was crowded with swiftly moving figures, each busy with an appointed and well-understood task. Some were erecting shelters of dressed skins stretched on a framework of hazel and willow boughs; some were driving stakes into the ground to tether oxen, sheep, and swine who had been driven up to serve as food; others again were rolling and hoisting into place on the outer edge of the trench huge stones, so that a single push might send them bounding down among an attacking force. These last workers were chiefly busy on the side where the road ran up, the remaining sides of the hill being very steep and encircled by the river. Trip after trip, up and down, were made by Feltor and his mother until all their movables were safe in the shelter of the hill fort. By this time the council had broken up and Feltor's father came to them at once.

"The Romans have already assembled on the farther side," he said, "they may be here any day now. A ship which came in this morning for tin brought the news. The sailors on board saw a great fleet lying off the shore ready to carry the Romans across. But there is no time to be lost. Much corn remains still to be cut and we must

make it all safe before our enemies arrive. It would be madness to leave it for them." So saying he hurried away to the plain below to assist the band of workers who were cutting down the yellow corn, and tying it in bundles ready for carrying away to safe hiding places, after the fort was fully stored. Feltor and his friend Hanun ran to assist the herdsmen, Bran and Lwyd bounding at their heels. The great mass of the domestic animals was driven far into the depths of the forest and pastured in hidden glades where the enemy could not reach them, a band of watchers remaining with them to keep off wild beasts, and to confine the animals within bounds. In such labours as these the day passed swiftly and, with the darkness of the night, the wearied Britons flung themselves down and were soon wrapped in the deep sleep of tired men.

The first shining of dawn over the eastern tree tops was the signal for everyone to be astir. Scouts were sent from the "Dinas" to glean news on every side, news of the coming of the enemy, news of what forces of their friends were gathering to join in the struggle against the invaders. From the watchers on the cliffs, five miles away, word was soon brought that no signs of the hostile

galleys were yet to be seen, while from all other directions came reports of bodies of their kinsmen gathering and marching for the coast. The valley below the hill fort lay in the direct line of march and had been agreed upon at the council as the meeting place, and so, all day long, a great throng of fighting men gathered and thickened there. Tall, strong, savage-looking fellows they were, their bodies blue with the woad with which they had stained themselves to look more dreadful to their enemies. Everyone was armed with spear and sword and shield, some riding the strong, wiry horses, reared in that country-side, others driving chariots, which they handled with wonderful skill, sending them over places where it seemed impossible for horses and wheels to go.

For hours Feltor and Hanun wandered through the great camp which had formed itself in their familiar valley, gazing with delight on the ever-changing scene, nor did they return to the "Dinas" until the dusk was falling and the watch fires beginning to brighten all over the plain.

The next morning the boys were sitting on the edge of the earthwork dangling their feet over the deep trench and staring down into the thick, white mist which hid the valley and the camp. But,

though nothing could be seen, yet the rattle of wheels, the ring of weapons against armour, the confused murmur of the host came up through the sharp, pleasant September air to show that things were still as they had seen them the night before.

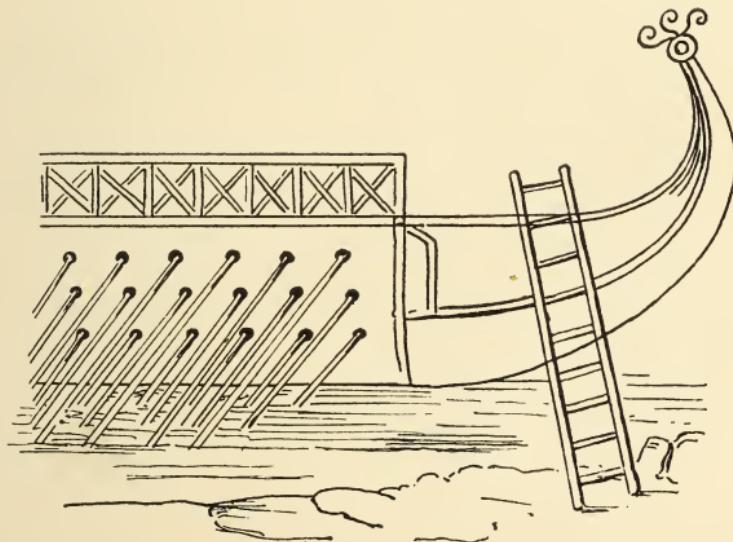
Suddenly, at the lower end of the valley, the murmur deepened, then swelled into outcry and uproar, a billow of deafening sound which rolled up the hollow vale, man shouting to man, a rush to arms, the thundering of horses' feet, the tumult of an army aroused and springing to battle. Leaning forward, the boys eagerly watched and soon saw half-a-dozen figures spring up the hill through the mist. Leaping down inside, the boys flew to the gate in time to hear the foremost messenger shout his tidings.

"The Romans are coming," he cried. "They have set sail and will be here in a few hours."

At that instant the autumn sun broke out strongly, and the river mists began to thin and scatter. The army below soon began to come into view, a moving mass already marching for the threatened point. At the lower end of the valley where the road plunged into the woodland, a steady stream of horse and foot was pouring into the dark shade of the forest. On they marched, the manes

of the horses tossing in the morning wind, the points of the shining spears flashing in the morning sun, until the plain was empty once more, and the hill fort was tenanted only by those unable to bear arms, and a strong body left to protect them.

But where were Feltor and Hanun? A great longing to see the terrible Romans for themselves had drawn them on, and they were now following at the rear of the line. Feltor had swung his bow and half-a-dozen arrows over his shoulder and Hanun had picked up a javelin which someone had left behind in the confusion.



TRIREMIS.

III.

THE BATTLE ON THE SHORE.

A short march brought the army to the shore, and the British warriors rapidly formed their line of battle along the sand. Feltor and Hanun climbed a rough path leading up the cliffs, and, springing out on the grassy summit, eagerly looked over the sea. Yes, there they were, the Roman galleys, far out at sea but twinkling with countless points of light as the sun flashed on the polished brass armour of the invaders. The boys perched themselves on the brink of the cliff and watched with all their eyes. On the shore below, the Britons had flung themselves down to rest from their march, and to eat and drink of the provisions they had brought. Two or three hours slipped by and the galleys came steadily on, until at last it was plain to the eye that they were crowded from stem to stern with soldiers in shining helmets and breast-plates. Now, the Britons lined the shore closely, the front rank prepared to hurl their javelins while those behind clashed their swords against their shields and shouted till the uproar rang from cliff to

cliff like thunder. But on came the ships, led by a larger one, on whose prow stood a man with a pale, severe face, carefully scanning the shore. This was the famous Julius Cæsar, the great Roman captain. He soon saw that the Britons had placed themselves in position to defend the best landing place, but he directed the galleys towards it and on they moved, their great oars sweeping backwards and forwards until the ships were close inshore. Many of the Britons dashed waist deep into the sea and hurled their javelins. So skilfully were these flung that numbers fell directly into the vessels where the soldiers were lining the sides, ready to leap down and march ashore. Another, and another shower of spears fell among the Romans, and it was plain that they did not like the idea of leaping into those dark waves, where to be struck down meant not merely a wound, but certain death. So, for awhile, even the terrible soldiers of Rome hung back. Cæsar saw the hesitation of his men and thought of a plan for driving the Britons off a little. There were, on board the ships, engines for throwing great stones and darts, and he ordered the men who worked these engines to direct them against the natives. This was done, and soon the Britons found that their spears were being answered

by great stones, which fell as if from the sky, and keen darts. Unused to this kind of fighting, they gave ground, and the water was left clear.

The boys on the cliff above had watched all this breathlessly. "The Romans are frightened, they dare not come," cried Feltor. "They do not move now."

"They are frightened," repeated Hanun. But at this moment a strange thing happened. A tall man sprang to the side of the foremost vessel. Instead of a sword and shield he held in his hands a strong staff crowned with the figure of an eagle. Raising this in the air, he called out to his companions, "Leap, comrades, unless you wish to see your standard taken by the enemy." So crying, he leapt into the tossing waves and marched alone against the Britons, holding the standard high above his head, and his face set firmly against the foe.

"Oh, brave, brave!" cried Feltor, "He fears nothing." Then both boys cried out in wonder at what followed. For at a flash, thousands and thousands of Roman soldiers bounded eagerly from the ships to save their standard bearer and his precious burden. The Britons, swinging their long swords above their heads, dashed to meet

them, and a dreadful battle was joined between the ships and the shore. Many a brave fellow fell on either side, but in spite of the utmost efforts of the defenders, the Romans fought their way, slowly and steadily, to land. For a few moments the battle slackened. The Britons fell back, and the Romans halted on the edge of the surf and re-formed their broken line. Then the opposing ranks swept against each other again and met with a dreadful crash. But they fought on other terms now. In the water it had been a struggle man to man, but now the Britons dashed in vain against the solid Roman line. In vain they hurled their javelins, and swung their swords, and urged their chariots against that wall of brass. Covered by their great, curved shields, dealing deadly thrusts with their short broad swords, the Roman legions, trained to act as one man, drove the Britons in hopeless confusion before their terrible charge.

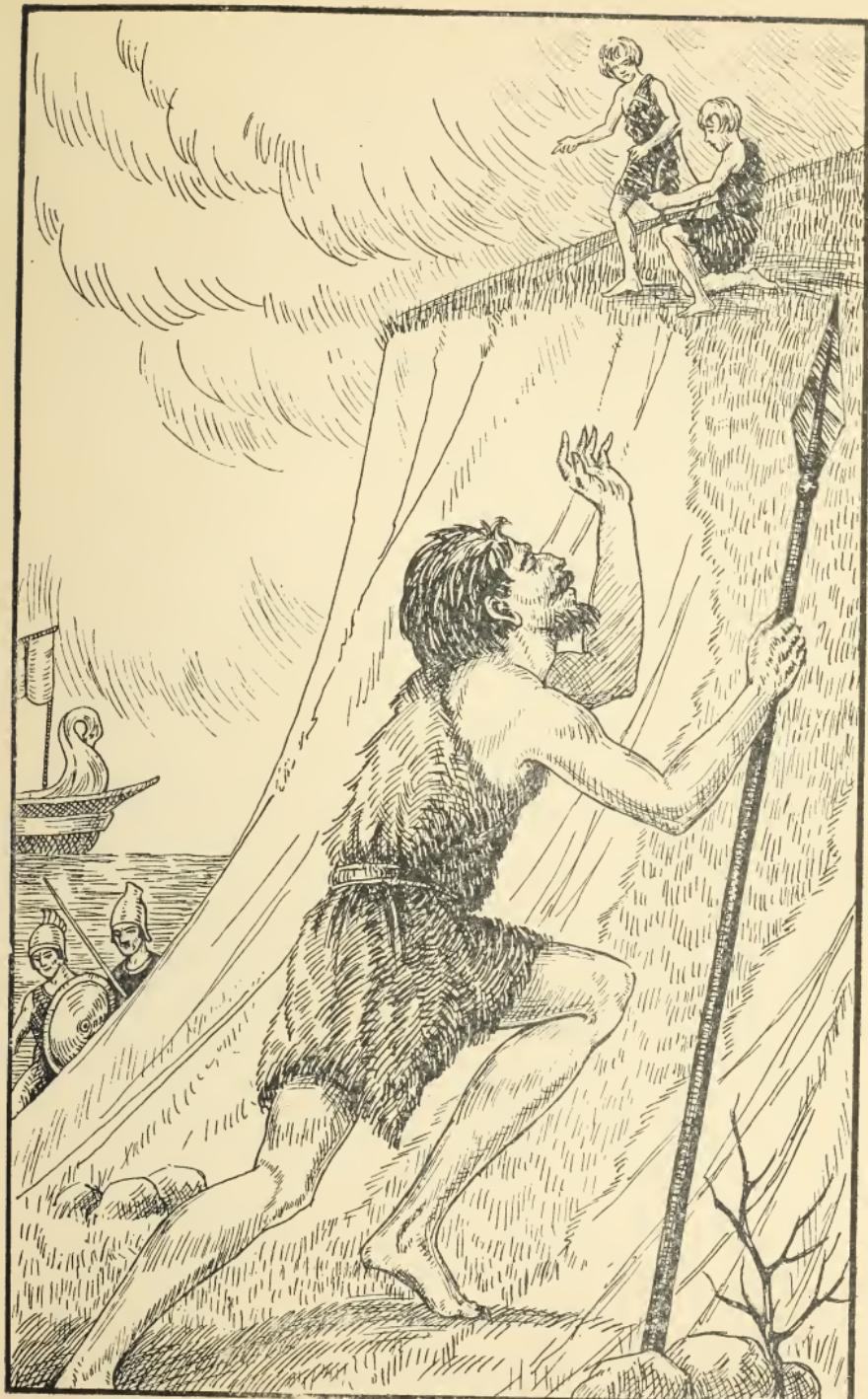
From the cliff above, the boys had watched the progress of the fight, and not they alone, but hundreds of others, women and aged warriors, had gathered to encourage their friends below with shouts of triumph when they gained an advantage, to mourn with shriek and outcry the fall of some well-known figure. As the Britons broke and fled

before the last awful rush of the legions, a long, mournful wail burst from the watchers above, then they also dispersed in flight. Yet Feltor and Hanun remained, their eyes fixed on the shore where scattered parties still kept up a desperate struggle. Suddenly, Hanun stretched out his arm.

“Look, Feltor,” he cried.

Feltor looked, and saw his father struggling up the path which led to the spot where they lay. Slowly and painfully, leaning hard upon his spear, for he was sorely wounded, Beric toiled upwards.

“Come, father,” shouted Feltor, and then he shouted again and louder still, for two helmets flashed round a winding below, and two light-armed Romans, of the band who were pursuing the flying Britons, came into view, bounding one after the other up the narrow path. Beric glanced behind and toiled on faster still, and Feltor leapt to meet him. The leading Roman, seeing his prey almost beyond his reach, stopped and poised a javelin. As he did so, Feltor dropped on his knee, an arrow fitted to his bowstring. He took swift aim and shot. Almost with the twang of the parting shaft a roar of pain arose from the soldier below and his javelin dropped from his right hand, while, with his left he tore at the arrow which Feltor had sent



HOW FELTOR SAVED HIS FATHER.

through and through his forearm. Then he sprang forward again, but, in his rage, missed his footing, and, falling heavily upon his comrade close behind, both rolled down the path. Before they could recover themselves, Feltor and his father had gained the top of the cliff, and, to their joy, saw Hanun leading a masterless horse which he had pursued and seized as soon as he saw Beric's plight. In an instant, Feltor's father was astride, and the two boys, each seizing a handful of the flowing mane, kept easily up as the horse galloped away over the smooth turf which ran inland. On they went, mile after mile, the good horse going steadily along the forest road, and the boys, fleet as young deer, bounding at its side. Such was their speed that they were among the first to arrive at the "Dinas" where the news of disaster put everyone on the alert. Beric was at once taken in charge by his wife and some old people skilled in healing wounds, and laid on a couch of soft skins, while the boys had to tell the story of the battle over and over again to those who had remained behind.

All the rest of the day, scattered bands of the defeated warriors came in until the fort was full to overflowing. Every preparation was made to resist the enemy if they should strike inland, and all that

night an anxious watch was kept. But day after day passed without sign of the Romans, and the spies who were sent out soon discovered that they had no intention of marching through the thick forest. In the open, the soldiers of the legion were a match for anyone, but they feared an ambush in the woods. Two, three weeks passed, and word was brought in that the Romans were preparing to depart.

One damp, foggy morning a party of three trotted down the forest glade towards the coast. The leader was Osweng, the swiftest runner in the valley, and a famous scout, and with him ran Feltor and Hanun. They were going to see what was the latest movement among their enemies. On they went until they came to the edge of the woods above the Roman camp. Here they paused and looked out cautiously into the misty morning, but the open country seemed empty. Osweng, who knew every inch of the coast, now held away to the right, where a high jutting cape overlooked the galleys riding at anchor. When they were within a few yards of the edge of the cliff, they flung themselves on their faces, and crept along until they could peep over the brink. The mists were now rapidly thinning, but sea and shore below still

remained hidden. The Romans seemed very busy. The shouts of the sailors, the rattle of oars in rowlocks, the clash of men moving about in armour, the sharp voices of the officers giving commands, all these sounds came up thin and clear through the keen autumn air to the watchers above. Suddenly the mist rolled seawards, and the three on the cliff looked on the shore, then rubbed their eyes, and looked again. It was empty. On glided the mist, flying before a sharp land breeze, and now out of it began to rise masts and sails, and lofty prows of galleys, all, O happy sight, set straight for Gaul. The watchers sprang to their feet, and shouted for joy. The Romans were gone. On rode the ships, the land breeze freshening in their sails, while Feltor and his companions flew back at top speed to spread the glad news that Britain was free of her foes.

[The events related in the preceding story took place in 55 B.C., and Julius Cæsar returned again in 54 B.C. But he did not stay long, and for nearly a hundred years after, the Roman authority over Britain was nothing but a name. Then, in 43 A.D. the Romans attacked Britain in earnest, and, after many years hard fighting, turned it into a Roman province. They were all powerful in Britain for three and a half centuries further, and then were called home to defend their own territories in 410 A.D.]

Bands of Saxon sea-rovers had made inroads on Britain long before the Romans left, and when the legions departed, they swooped down on the country, not merely to plunder and rob, but to seize the land and make their own homes in it. Kent was the first piece of land torn from the Britons. This took place about the middle of the fifth century. About 471 A.D., a band of Saxons—afterwards to be known as the South Saxons, and their kingdom as Sussex—landed at Selsey and fought their way eastwards until they reached the great forest of the Andredswæld, a vast belt of trees, one hundred and twenty miles long, by thirty wide. Here, their progress was checked by the strong fortress of Anderida (Pevensey), which had been built by the Romans, and was bravely defended by the Britons.]



ROMAN SOLDIERS.

THE COMING OF THE SOUTH SAXONS.

- I. HOW SERMAT FIRED THE BEACON.
 - II. THE FALL OF ANDERIDA.
-

I.

HOW SERMAT FIRED THE BEACON.

THE late afternoon sun was slanting its rays brightly over the great fortress town of Anderida when a band of warriors marched up a wide glade of the vast forest which lay near at hand. The men were dark, powerful fellows, armed with sword and shield, and stepping along gaily, timing their steps to the swing of a war song which their leader chanted in a clear, powerful voice. Beside Elangor, the singer, ran his son Sermat, and, as the trees thinned, Sermat ran eagerly forward to gaze on the walls of the town. When they came out on the meadowlike expanse which lay beneath the walls, the warriors went no further, but flung themselves on the grass to rest.

Miners, and ironworkers from the great forest of the Andredsweald were these men. But now they

had thrown aside their tools and taken their weapons, for every day the fierce Saxons were forcing their way farther inland, and the whole strength of the forest was being brought out to withstand them.

Sermat, too full of wonder and curiosity to remain still, was moving restlessly about, when suddenly he darted forward with a cry of joy. A tall, stately old man was approaching them, his hair and long, venerable beard as white as snow, walking slowly, and leaning on a staff.

“Wenegog!” cried the warriors, and sprang to their feet to receive him.

“Oh, grandfather,” said Sermat. I was wondering where you were.”

Elangor came forward to meet his father whom the infirmities of old age had driven to take refuge in the city, and soon all were listening intently as the old man told the news and the rumours that were flying through the town.

“All the Britons of the forest,” he said, “are gathering for a great blow at the invaders. From all parts of the Andredswæld they have summoned the fighting men just as you have been called. It is said that fresh bands of Saxons are pushing on for the city here. They have been held in check

time and again by our brave fellows on the western side of the forest, who have hidden themselves in the woods by day, and rushed on the foe in the darkness of night. But, in spite of all, day by day they are nearing us, and unless a great blow is dealt to them they will shortly surround the city."

While this talk was going on, Sermat had been lost in wonder again, staring and staring at the great, massive, frowning walls of the fortress, and now he took his grandfather's hand to attract the old man's attention.

"Grandfather," said Sermat, "Who built those walls?"

"Ah, who, my boy," returned the old man, "the mighty Romans built them. Had they but remained in our island these fellows would have never got this grip of the country. Yes, the terrible swords of the legions would soon have made short work of them."

"And you have seen the Romans, grandfather?" pursued the boy. "How wonderful?"

"Yes," said the old man, his eye brightening, "I have seen the Roman legions. Four score years ago is it now, when, as a boy, less than this child," and he laid his hand on Sermat's head, "I watched them crowd into their galleys and

leave our shores for ever. I see them now," continued the stately old man, in a lofty tone of musing, "the famous legionaries clad in shining armour, the eagle standards, the galleys with rows of oars set in order, the crowds upon the shore, and ah, the weeping and wailing, for many were leaving behind wives and children, and dearest friends."

Every one listened in the deepest silence, for of all the men of the wide Andredswaeld, old Wene-gog alone had gazed upon the Romans, that mighty people who had done so much for the Britons and left such deep traces over all their land.

At this moment an officer rode up and gave Elangor directions as to the route he and his band must follow, and they prepared for instant departure. Farewells were exchanged, and Wene-gog turned back to the city, while the warriors pressed forward to join the main army. They had been on the march for an hour before Elangor found that his son had slipped among the men.

"You here, Sermat!" he cried, in surprise, "I thought you went to the town with your grandfather."

"Let the lad come," said Heurtan, a burly, greyheaded old warrior, "His feet are nimble and

if we have need to send a message back it will save the loss of a fighting man."

"There is truth in that, Heurtan," replied Elangor, so, to his great delight, Sermat went on with the troop. The dusk was falling when they approached the outposts of the army of the Britons, but they did not join the main body. A horseman met them, gave Elangor a message, and the word of command was given to hold away to the right. A short march brought them to the foot of a steep hill, and up they went. Word was passed through the band that they were to guard the beacon, and in a little while they came out on the hill top where a great pile of light brushwood stood out against the sky.

"What is that for, Heurtan?" said Sermat.

"That," said old Heurtan, "Why, to give warning to the folks in the town."

"But they cannot see this hill from the town."

"No, but there is a rising piece of ground in the forest, which commands this hill, and can be seen from the town as well, being midway between the two. On that there is another such pile as this, and a minute after we clap a light to this heap they will see it, either smoke by day, or flame by night, and then they fire their beacon in turn,

and the watchers on the walls know how matters have gone."

"Whether we have won or lost?" said the boy.

"As for winning," replied Heurtan, "We shall not trouble the beacon for that. Good news may travel as slowly as you like. It is ill news of which you must give early warning, and the beacon will be fired if we come off the worst."

"Will it burn up quickly?" asked Sermat.

"Ay, that it will, lad," said old Heurtan, "oil and resin, and everything that will take fire at once have been used. The men who built that know what they are about. Toss a lighted twig into it anywhere, and away it roars."

Sermat now turned his back upon the pile and looked away into the darkness. He uttered a sharp cry of wonder as he did so.

"Oh, Heurtan, what is that?"

Far, far away to the south-west, a thousand twinkling points of fire shone through the night. They seemed to stand as thick upon the plain as stars in a clear sky, and with as little order.

"They are the camp fires of our enemies," said Heurtan. "By their number the Saxons should be strong indeed. However, they must play the man to-morrow to withstand our onset."

"And where is our army?" asked Sermat.

"We cannot see it," answered the old warrior.
"Yonder ridge hides it from our view."

At this moment Elangor called upon Heurtan, and Sermat was left alone. He wandered round the pile, and on the further side, found the two men whose task it was to fire it when word was given. For this purpose, they had a tiny fire of two or three smouldering blocks of turf, lying in the bottom of a hole about a foot deep. This care was observed lest a spark should blow on the pile. Beside the hole lay a few blocks with which to feed the fire. Sermat now heard his name called and ran to old Heurtan who was summoning him.

"Here's your supper, lad," said he, handing to Sermat a large piece of barley bread, "and there's your bed," and he pointed to a heap of dried grass and heather flung into a hollow of the bank.

Next morning, when Sermat thrust his head out of the heap into which he had burrowed, he found the sun well up and shining brightly over the wide stretch of heathy upland which ran away to the south of the beacon hill. He looked to the quarter where the Saxons lay, but nothing could be seen in that direction, for a faint mist hid the distance. Beyond the ridge rose a tramping of

feet, both of men and horses, mingled with the clash of arms and the cries of the marching Britons.

"Where are they going, Heurtan?" asked Sermat.

"To take position where the hills rise from the lower ground, about three miles south of here," said old Heurtan, "and there stand and fight it out."

Sermat ran to the summit of the ridge, and for nearly two hours watched the army of the Britons marching slowly away, until it reached a lower slope, and he saw it no more. Then he returned to the beacon hill to find those who had been left to guard it perched on the highest point, and gazing eagerly towards the scene of the coming struggle.

They waited long and patiently, and about two hours after mid-day, a low, murmuring sound rolled up to their ears. It sounded like the dash of waves on a distant shore, but the watchers knew well what it was, and the men gripped their weapons tighter, and looked at each other. They knew that the opposing lines of battle had closed in that faint, far-off roar, and that now Briton and Saxon were locked in deadly combat. One, two hours passed, and then signs of the

battle began to be apparent. Wounded men fell back in twos, and threes, making their way as well as they could towards the camp of the previous night, but these, when questioned, could give no decided account of the chances of victory. The battle, as they had seen it, still swayed to and fro with equal fortune. Hour after hour slipped by, and the noise of the stubbornly contested field still rose to the listening band. The dusk was drawing on, when a warrior, who had been sent out to search for news, ran back at full speed.

“Elangor,” he cried, “a party of the Saxons are close at hand. They are marching direct for the beacon here.”

Every man sprang to his weapons, and the band hurried down the hill. As they did so, the dying evening light flashed on the spears and shining battle axes of a body of Saxons emerging from a woody hollow to the left.

“Shall I fire the beacon, Elangor?” shouted one of the watchmen.

“No, no,” replied Elangor. “We do not know yet how the main battle has gone.”

Raising their war cry, the Britons rushed upon their foes, and the latter, closing their line, swung aloft their great axes and waited in firm

array. The two parties crashed together in desperate struggle, and almost as they did so, it became apparent how the battle had gone. Of a sudden, the country became full of flying men, and galloping horses, and pursuing Saxons. The band which had been marching to capture the beacon, of which their scouts had given them warning, was but a little ahead of the general retreat of the Britons; and Sermat heard his father shouting from the midst of the clanging blows.

"The beacon! Fire the beacon!"

Sermat turned and ran to warn the watchmen. But what was that line of figures clear against the evening sky, surrounding the beacon pile.

Two troops of Saxons had closed in, one upon each side, and, either the watchmen had been surprised and slain, or had left their post to join Elangor, for the enemy were in complete possession of the summit, and were hastily disposing themselves in a circle around the beacon to prevent it being fired.

Straight up the hill went Sermat, gliding on his naked feet like a shadow through the patches of gorse which clothed its sides. He stayed an instant under the last clump of bushes and looked carefully before him. He was now within

thirty yards of the beacon, and the two Saxon warriors nearest to him were several paces apart. Sermat bounded from his hiding place, and flew for the gap. So swiftly and silently did the boy dart forward, and so different was his figure from anything which the Saxons had expected as an enemy that he took them entirely by surprise.

But only for an instant. Both sprang towards him, and their terrible axes whistled through the air, to swing harmlessly behind Sermat who had passed them like the wind. The boy rushed on round the pile, unseen, for, on the cry of warning, everyone looked outwards for the foe, never dreaming of the little form gliding at their backs. Sermat stooped at the hole, and the sharp smell of the smouldering turf caught his nostrils. Without an instant's delay he thrust in his arm, seized the block of living fire with his naked hand, and hurled it full into the waiting pile. He drew in one deep, shuddering breath of pain, then leapt away for the darkness and safety.

As he did so, up and through the pile ran the fire first, with a sputtering hiss, then, with a roar and an instant sheet of flame. This outburst of the beacon proved the source of safety to Sermat. He was trapped in the ring of Saxon guards, but

the sudden happening of that which they were set there to prevent, so astonished and bewildered them, that he was through them and flying down the hill, before they recovered their presence of



SERMAT PASSED THEM LIKE THE WIND.

mind. At the foot of the hill, Sermat nearly ran against a hobbling figure.

"Ah, lad, is that you?" cried Heurtan's voice.

"Yes, Heurtan, what is the matter? Are you hurt?"

"Something of that sort. One of those fellows gave me a slash across the thigh, and it's no help to running away." The old warrior chuckled grimly, and plodded on, leaning heavily on a spear haft.

"Where is my father?" cried Sermat.

"Safe and sound, the last I saw of him," replied Heurtan. "He came off without a touch, and was gathering together what he could of our men to cover the retreat. But I knew I could do no more, and so I marched. But who fired the beacon? That was a lucky stroke indeed."

Sermat told his story, and old Heurtan stopped his hobbling for a moment to clap his great, hard hands together, and shout in delight. Suddenly, the thud of a horse's feet pounding over the turf came to their ears, and they looked back, then slipped into the bushes. But, as the horseman came nearer, they recognised him in the red light of the beacon, and shouted "Woerex."

The rider drew rein, and they stepped from their shelter.

"Heurtan and Sermat," cried the other. "And you, Heurtan, are wounded."

"How is it with you, Woerex?" said Sermat.

"Not touched," returned the young man, springing

down, "but I came across this riderless horse, and luckily too, as it seems. Up with you, old comrade."

"Nay, lads, save yourselves," said Heurtan.

"That is what we wish," said Woerex. "But I know nothing of the paths on this side of the forest, nor does Sermat. So you must be our guide and we will run at your side."

"That is true," said Heurtan, climbing slowly and painfully to the back of the horse. "I know every inch of this country, day or night. We must make straight for Anderida."

At this moment, a wave of the retreat surged up behind them, shrieks and outcries of the flying Britons, and triumphant shouts of the pursuing Saxons. The startled horse plunged forward, Heurtan gave him his head, and away they dashed, straight for the sheltering darkness of the great forest.

II.

THE FALL OF ANDERIDA.

SERMAT lay at full length on the wall of Anderida, feeling very hungry. It was nearly twenty-four hours since he had tasted food, for there was only enough in the town to allow of one meal a day, and the time for it had not yet arrived. He, and Heurtan, and Woerex had got safely within the gates of the great fortress on the night of the flight, but the next day, the whole Saxon host had surrounded Anderida on every side, cutting off all chance, either of escape from the town, or of help being supplied from without.

The blockade had now lasted so long, and the Saxons had been so watchful that no food should pass their lines, that great distress existed in Anderida. It was the only way open to the Saxons to force the town to surrender. They had no engines of war with which to batter a breach in those massive walls. They had leapt from their long ships to the British shore, armed with axe, sword, and shield. But these weapons, all conquering in face of the foe, were of no avail against

the vast ramparts which the mighty Romans had flung up around the great fortress town.

So they maintained unsleeping watch and ward, biding their time and awaiting their opportunity. Time and again, the brave Britons, cooped up within the walls, had dashed out against their foes, but sally after sally had failed, and the grim courage of the Saxon warriors held their iron line unbroken around the doomed city.

Sermat now heard the sound of footsteps behind him. He looked round, and saw Heurtan and Wenegog, coming up the narrow steps which led to that part of the wall. Near at hand a watchman paced up and down to give warning should anyone approach from without.

Heurtan walked with a slight limp, for though his wound had completely healed under the care of Wenegog, who was very skilful in such matters, yet he would never again move as nimbly as before.

Woerex was not with them now. He had taken part in one of the first sallies by which the Britons attempted to break the encircling line, and had never returned. Whether the brave young warrior had died in the fierce struggle, or fallen into the hands of the Saxons, his friends within the town knew not. They only knew that when the

defeated Britons had fled back pell-mell to the refuge of the walls, Woerex had not come with them.

Heurtan and Wenegog sat down on the wall, and looked long, and earnestly, at the Saxon encampment, half-a-mile away. The murmur of the host came clearly to their ears, all the clearer for the silence of the town behind them. The hum of busy Anderida had long ceased. The hammer of the workman was silent, the clatter of the market-place was hushed, the hand of starvation was laid on the great town, and under its grim touch everything was mute.

“How far is the end now, Wenegog?” said Heurtan, in a low voice.

“If the sally of to-night fails,” said the old man, “all is lost. Even now food is running short for the fighting men, and if they can no longer be fed who is to defend the city?”

There was silence again for a few minutes, then Heurtan spoke.

“From which gate do they set out?”

“From the eastern gate. It is the nearest to the forest.”

“Is not that the gate near which we live, grandfather?” asked Sermat.

"It is," said Wenegog. "We shall see them depart."

"I trust the Saxons have no idea of what's afoot," said Heurtan. "It is beyond a doubt that they were prepared for our last onset. Some deserting traitor must have carried the news."

"Hunger is a hard taskmaster," said Wenegog.

"Ay, ay, but to earn a full meal at the price of the overthrow of our hopes, and death to our brave fellows is a price indeed," returned Heurtan.

"The guards are doubled all round the walls this time," said Wenegog, "the gates are watched day and night, and we can do no more."

Later in the day, as evening was drawing on, Sermat was returning home along the wide passage which ran at the foot of the wall. The Captain of the Guard at the gate near which he lived had sent him with a message to the opposite side of the town, and he was hurrying back to be in time to see the warriors depart upon their last great attempt to break the Saxon lines. Not far from home, he came, to his great surprise, upon a part of the wall which seemed unguarded. The sky was still bright with the evening light, but no figure of a watchman stood out against it. But, as Sermat looked, a figure appeared climbing out to the top.

"Oh! there he is," thought Sermat, but the man's motions were so curious that he stopped to watch him. The figure bent down as if fastening something, then slipped out of sight on the farther side of the wall. Sermat instantly thought of the spies of which he had heard his grandfather and Heurtan talk, and hurried up to the place. Yes, it was as he had fancied. A strong, thick rope was hanging down outside the wall, secured by a loop passed round a projecting stone on the inner side of the rampart. No sign was visible of the figure he had seen.

"He has slipped down and run away to the forest," thought Sermat, and he began dragging the rope up at once. He saw the danger of leaving it, for where a man had gone down another might come up.

When he had pulled up the rope, he ran away, leaving it in coils on the top of the wall, and sought his grandfather. The house in which old Wenegog lived had been in the old Roman days the residence of a high official, but it had come down to meaner uses, and was inhabited by a colony of the poorer sort. It was a lofty, solidly-built house with a broad, flat roof, and here Sermat found the old man and Heurtan, looking down upon

the warriors gathering below. Sermat told what he had seen, and Heurtan hurried away to warn the captain of the guard. But, after a while he returned, unsuccessful.

"I cannot get speech of him," said Heurtan. "He is busied with a thousand things, and, after all, this sally will settle affairs. One or two slipping either in or out of the city can make but little difference to matters as they stand now."

Sermat was hanging over the parapet and gazing eagerly at the open space before the gate. Down there, between the lofty houses and the high wall it was already dark, and a few, flaming torches cast a smoky light by which the warriors formed themselves into ranks.

From every window, from every roof top, a crowd of pale, anxious faces peered down at them. For so great a concourse it was strangely silent. The spirit of defeat seemed to hang over them. The usual gay clash and clang inseparable from the movements of armed men came only in low and fitful bursts, showing that they were not taking their positions with the proud confidence and strong, firm step of the soldier who believes himself marching to victory.

The rattle of bolts and the creaking of the great

gates drew Sermat's eyes in that direction. The keepers were slowly drawing them open, and, as they did so, the front line of the Britons moved forward at the word of command.

The van of the out-going troops had reached the middle of the gate, filling the pathway from side to side, when a dreadful shout arose from without. Every heart stood still in terror. It was the war cry of the Saxons, the terrible Ahoi ! Ahoi ! ; and in another instant the front rank of the Britons recoiled in utter confusion, as they were driven back before the sudden rush of their enemies.

But the Britons, fierce in their despair, recovered themselves at once, and a furious battle was joined in the very mouth of the gate.

The night had now fallen dark, and, for a while, the combatants knew not each other, but struck out wildly at random. But light was soon forthcoming. Torches were kindled by the Saxons outside the wall and flung over the heads of their comrades fighting in the front ranks. Blazing fagots were held aloft on the points of long lances, and thrust against the gates to fire them. From these fagots, daubed as they were with oil and pitch, great sheets of bright flame leapt forth,

and cast a strong glare over the mad medley of combat in the gate.

As the light burst out, everyone looked anxiously to see how it fared with their brave comrades below.



WATCHING THE BATTLE IN THE GATE.

“Ah,” cried old Wenegog, pointing with his trembling finger, “See them, ah, see them, the Berserkers, the dreadful Berserkers.”

Yes, there they were, the mad fighters, the men who dreaded nothing, the men who hugged danger

to their bosom as a friend. The front rank of the Saxons, the band now bearing the brunt of the battle, was composed of some five-and-twenty gigantic warriors, bare-headed to a man, some clothed in a coarse linen shirt, others naked to the waist, and all fighting with a fury which held the Britons in desperate play. They were of different ages, from tall, fair young men with bright hair, to old, grizzled warriors scarred with the tokens of many a fight, but one in the furious valour with which they hurled their naked bodies upon the Britons clad in shining armour.

Most of the Berserkers were armed with huge battle-axes, but some of the elder men carried great hammers, with which they struck down foeman after foeman, smiting great sparks from the helmets and breastplates of their opponents. But the very pick of the Britons had been placed

[Among the Old English were to be found men of such fierce and dauntless courage, that they scorned the advantage of defensive armour, but rushed bare-sark—that is, bare of their *shirt* of mail—upon their foes. We still use the work and speak of “Berserk rage,” by which we understand a course of action, where the actor dashes upon his opponents with a careless and desperate fury, recking nothing of the wounds he receives himself, so that he inflicts injury upon his enemy.]

in the van, and they fought as all brave men fight when standing at bay.

“Ahoi ! Ahoi !” The wild, Berserk scream rises high above the din of battle, high above the shrill outcries of the watching Britons.

“Ahoi ! Ahoi !” The dripping battle-axes, the ponderous hammers rise and fall, and the fierce, blue, Saxon eyes gleam and shine in the red light of the dancing flames, and the long, yellow hair floats behind, as they spring and strike home again and again.

“Ahoi ! Ahoi !” The deep, rolling, long echoing cry bursts from ten thousand Saxon throats, as they see the Britons—brave men, but over-matched—waver and give ground before the furious onset of the mighty Berserk champions.

“Ahoi ! Ahoi !” The Britons break, and fly, and like a resistless flood, the Saxon hosts pour into the doomed city, fire and sword in hand.

As the invaders dashed in, a loud groan burst from the watching multitude before they turned and sought safety in flight.

“Anderida is lost, is lost,” cried old Wenegog in a mournful voice.

“Come, then,” said Heurtan, “We must save ourselves, and Sermat’s rope shall do it.”

They were in no immediate danger, for the house had only one opening on the street, a small strong door, now securely barricaded. As they hurried downstairs, battle-axes thundered heavily upon this, and women began to scream.

"Silence, and make for the door behind," shouted Heurtan. "There is fifteen minutes' work for them at yonder entrance. Use it as well as you may."

Sermat led the way rapidly to the wall and found the rope just as he had left it. That part of Anderida was silent and deserted, for every one had made a rush to the gates on the opposite side of the town, in hope of escape. The uproar near the entrance which the Saxons had forced was deafening, and was spreading rapidly. Heurtan saw that the loop was safe around the projecting stone, then dropped the rope.

"Down you go, Sermat," said he.

Sermat slipped over the edge of the wall, and slid down easily.

"I am on the ground, Heurtan," he called out, "the rope just touches it."

"Go, Heurtan," he heard his grandfather saying above. "I cannot descend thus, and, after all, at my age, what matters it?"

"And think you, father Wenegog," laughed Heurtan, "that I will go and leave the oldest and wisest of our blood to be slain by the sea wolves? No, no. You have plenty of strength left to cling to my shoulders, which is far easier than hanging by a rope, and if I cannot let myself down twenty feet with you on my back, may I never again be called 'Heurtan of the Strong Arm,' Sermat," he continued, "look out below, and hold the rope steady so that I can feel it with my feet."

Sermat did as he was bid, and, in a few moments saw a black mass moving slowly and carefully down towards him.

"Safe and sound," said Heurtan, as his feet touched the ground, and he set the old man down.

"Which way now, Wenegog?"

"Straight before us," said the latter. "We are now about half way between two gates. Right or left we may run into danger."

In a few minutes they were close upon the encircling encampment, and they moved very gently and cautiously. Sermat ran ahead, as a scout, but returned quickly.

"The camp is empty," he said, "I have been among the little huts which they have built, and there is no one there."

They went on, and found that the boy spoke truly. The evening watch fires were blazing and crackling merrily, in a perfect solitude. The triumphant roar with which the Saxons had swept into the city had drawn the watchmen from the camp, to share in the sack and plunder. They passed quickly through the firelight to the darkness beyond, and pushed on, as rapidly as Wenegog could travel, for their forest home. They had been marching about two hours, when suddenly they heard voices in front. They stopped and listened eagerly. What language was it? Were they Saxons or Britons? The sound came again.

"Friends, friends," cried Heurtan. "It is our own tongue." And he shouted to them. An answering voice now rang down the forest glade, and, on hearing it, the fugitives uttered cries of joy.

"Elangor, my son," said old Wenegog.

"Father, father," shouted Sermat. The two parties rushed towards each other, and, for a moment, the dangers amidst which they stood were forgotten in the pleasure of such a meeting. Then Elangor and his companions listened breathlessly while old Wenegog told of the capture of Anderida.

"Our land is lost then," said Elangor. "We must say farewell to the Forest. If the Saxons

have seized Anderida we can hold out no longer. But where can we go?"

"To Wankard of *Caer y Graig, north of the †Tafwys," said Wenegog, "our ancient friendship will win us welcome."

"You are right, father," said Elangor. "We have no other refuge."

Several of the small, wiry ponies of the forest breed were with Elangor's men, and Wenegog was placed on one of these. The party turned northwards, marching by the stars, and, as they went, Elangor told how he had escaped from the battle, but failed to reach the town, and since, with the remnants of his band, had been hanging on the outskirts of the Saxon camp.

An hour later, they marched over a ridge far to the north of the town. On the top they paused and looked behind. The sky was red above from the city burning below. Anderida was a mere blot of flame in the darkness.

"There burns our last hope," said the venerable old man. "The Saxon is now the master of our country. We have done what we could, but our struggles have been in vain, Come, my children,

* Caer y Graig means "The Fortress of the Rock."

† Tafwys, the British name for the Thames.

we must seek afar the safety denied us in our homes. Let us go!"

With a last, long look towards their beloved Forest, now hidden in the distant gloom, the little band crossed the ridge, and plunged into the valley beyond and hurried northwards through the night.

[Many other bands of invaders came sailing across the North Sea, and, landing on the south and east coasts, attacked the Britons and drove them westwards, until the latter held no land except in the extreme west of the island. These bands had many different tribal names, such as *Gewissas*, and *Hwiccas*, and so on, but, in the main, they belonged to one or other of three great divisions, viz.:—The Angles, who came from districts we now call Schleswig and Holstein, to the South of Denmark; the Saxons who lived near the mouths of the Weser and Elbe, and in Friesland; and the Jutes from Jutland, which lies in the north of Denmark. At first, each of these bands formed a separate kingdom of its own, wherever its members happened to settle, thus the East Saxons founded Essex; the West Saxons, Wessex; the Angles, East Anglia, and Mercia, and Northumbria. But very soon these kingdoms began to fight with each other, to see which should be chief among them, and, by the year 828 A.D., it became clear that Wessex, the great kingdom of the south of England, was to take the lead. While this struggle for supremacy was going on, Christianity had been introduced by St. Augustine in

597 A.D., and had spread over the whole of England. But the English were now about to suffer just as they had made the Britons suffer. Great bands of Vikings crossed the North Sea to attack England, just as the Angles and Saxons themselves had done, three hundred years before. The general name of Danes was given to these invaders, though they did not all come from Denmark, many being Norwegians, Swedes, and Jutes. They began to trouble England in 787 A.D., and becoming bolder, as they found that much rich plunder was to be had, assailed the country on all sides. At first, they confined themselves to raids, retiring to their own land with their spoils, but in 851 A.D., a band wintered in Thanet, and from this date they began to seize land and make settlements. They found no difficulty in doing this in many parts of the country, but the kings of Wessex stood out boldly against them, and prevented them from conquering all England. The most famous king of Wessex was Alfred the Great, who reigned from 871 A.D. Many stories are told of Alfred, how he learned to read, how he grew up brave, and clever, and thoughtful, how he struggled against the Danes. With the latter, he fought battle after battle, but in 878 A.D., he was compelled to fly before them.



C. J. STANILAND

Fig. 1

KING ALFRED LEARNING TO READ.

ALFRED AND THE DANES.

I. THE STRANGER.

II. THE KING.

III. THE DANES.

I.

THE STRANGER.

“HEY, Asc, run, run ! Good dog,” cried Osric, as shaggy, long-legged Asc bounded in front of the herd of pigs just making a rush down the wrong path. The pigs knew Asc very well, and knew also how his sharp, white teeth felt when he snapped at their ears, and so they turned and bolted in the opposite direction.

“Mind, Hilda !” shouted the boy, and away ran his sister, her bare, brown feet flying over the forest turf, as she headed them off from a fresh track which did not lead towards home. Finding themselves baffled once more, the grunting herd gave up for the present their designs of running away, and marched slowly along the glade, Osric, Hilda, and Asc following at their heels.

Every day Osric and his sister drove their herd of about fifty swine to pasture in the forest, and in the wide marshes which spread about their island home in the fens of Somerset, and every day they had to run, and plan, and watch carefully, against the surprises which the cunning pigs prepared for them.

Now, they went half-a-mile or more without trouble, then they began their nightly planning as to how they should pass the Great Oak. The Great Oak stood alone in the midst of an open space where half-a-dozen paths met. The road home turned up the hill, but the children knew well that that was the very last way which the pigs would take.

Osric gave a command to the dog, and Asc, who understood the business in hand as well as any one, took a turn to the left, ready to stop the rush which the pigs were sure to make for the track which ran down to the marsh, while Hilda drew away to the right to block another path. Osric remained at the rear of the herd and urged them on.

Slowly and steadily they went forward, crossing the open ground straight for home just like innocent, obedient sheep, instead of the artful and designing creatures that they were. Suddenly, at the very

moment the boy and girl thought themselves safe, away went their charges full speed for the marsh. But Asc was there, ready to meet them, so round whirled the pigs and made off in another direction.

Hilda was the nearest to them, and she ran with all her might. Osric ran too, but the pigs were too quick, and were just slipping away between them when a man with a long staff made his appearance at the mouth of the path for which the animals were rushing.

He checked the pigs, and drove them back, and now, since every other way was cut off to them, they marched home without delay. So busy were the children with their troublesome task, that until they found themselves safely climbing the little hill upon which their house stood, they had not a moment to spare to look at the newcomer.

When they glanced up at him to thank him for his help, they started in surprise. It was not, as they had thought, one of their neighbours, who had turned up at a lucky moment, but an utter stranger. He saw their surprise, and also the girl's fear, for a stranger might be an enemy, and he smiled.

"Do not be frightened." said he, "I am a friend."

His pleasant smile, and deep, sweet voice

instantly reassured them, and they moved nearer to him.

"She thought that perhaps you were one of those wicked Danes, of whom we have heard so much," said Osric, taking his sister's hand.

"No," said the stranger. "I am not a Dane, I am a true Englishman, and love my country beyond anything else."

"Have you ever seen the Danes?" asked the boy.

The stranger threw back his head and laughed.

"Ay, ay, my boy," he said, "I have seen the Danes. What is the name of this place, and who lives here?"

"It is our house," said Osric, "and we call it Ash Topp."

They had now climbed the gentle slope, and stood before the children's home. The pigs, without any further bidding, marched into a kind of fold with mud walls, and lay contentedly down upon heaps of rushes scattered there. The stranger and Osric made fast the gate through which the pigs had gone, then turned towards the house. The latter was low, and long, built of large, rude pieces of timber, plastered with clay, and a roof of thatch, supplied by the rushes which grew in great quantities in the fen hard by.

As they approached, the master of the house appeared at the door, Hilda clasping his hand. He gave the stranger a hearty Old English welcome, and flung the strong, iron-banded door wide back for him to enter.

Inside, a great wood fire was burning on the broad hearth, and in the chimney corner, stood a settle, spread comfortably with skins. The settle had one occupant already, a well-to-do farmer of the neighbourhood, and he looked with much surprise to see the newcomer, with his poor and dusty clothes, step quietly forward, and sit down by his side with no more than a grave bend of the head.

Hilda came to the opposite side of the fire to look shyly at the stranger, who was spreading his hands over the leaping flames. He was a young man, about thirty years of age, tall and straight, and bearing himself like a soldier. His calm, grave, handsome face, his clear, strong, steady eyes, his long, beautiful golden hair, the smooth, shapely hands, which he held over the fire, all these formed a strange contrast to his mean attire.

Looking upon him you would have said, "Here is a man who will never be moved aside when he has resolved on his purpose," and after a moment,

you would have added, “Nor will there be need to move him, for his purpose is sure to be good.” But Gurth, the neighbour, saw nothing but the old clothes, he did not see the man inside them.

“He wants not assurance,” said Gurth, looking round on Godrith, Hilda’s father. “He sits himself down in the place of honour when a stool drawn up to the other side of the fire would have served his turn well enough.”

“I did not intend to presume, friend,” said the stranger, mildly. “I ask pardon if I have given offence. ’Tis true, I look poor. But I have come by my poverty in a fashion common enough in our day, more’s the pity. I have lost my all, fighting against the Danes.”

“And are you sorry?” asked Hilda, coming to his side.

“Sorry, my little girl,” cried he, putting his arm round Hilda, “Oh, no! Had I a thousand times as much to lose, I would struggle till the whole was spent sooner than give up a foot of English land to the enemy.”

“Well said, stranger!” roared Godrith, striking the table with his fist. “Well said, indeed! And, look ye, neighbour Gurth, if ye cannot keep your sharp tongue between your teeth, e’en begone with

it. It shames my hospitality to hear such words spoken of an unoffending man. If he hath fought for our land, then the warmest corner by my fire and the best fare on my board is his. Perhaps you can tell us something of how the fighting has gone?" he continued to the stranger.

"I can," said the latter. "I have taken part in every battle of the last seven years."

"There, now," cried Godrith. "Think of that! Tell us the whole story, man. We are out of the way of news, and, except that these bloodthirsty Danes have done much mischief to the country, we know but little."

"Willingly," said the stranger, and looked into the fire as if collecting his thoughts. Gurth had risen with an offended air, upon Godrith speaking so plainly to him, and moved as if to go. But the chance of hearing news was too much for him, and so he gave a tug or two at the skins as if he had only got up to put them straight. He sat down again and the stranger began.

"It is now seven years since our own kingdom of Wessex had to face the Danes in earnest. Before that, they had been doing much harm in other parts of England, and we had known them in Wessex, too. But it was in eight hundred and seventy-one

that they attacked us with the avowed intention of over-running and capturing our country. And they kept us fully employed, for we fought six battles in the year."

"Six battles!" cried Godrith.

"Six desperate battles," said the stranger, "besides many smaller encounters. At Englefield, the Danes won. At Reading, and at Ashdown, near Reading, they were beaten. Then the English lost the day at Basing, and at Merton, and in the last battle the King was badly wounded, and soon died." The speaker's voice fell into a low, sad tone, and he paused for a moment.

"Ay, ay," said Godrith. "Ethelred, that was, and then came Alfred, our present King."

"Yes," said the stranger, "Alfred fought the sixth battle at Wilton, where victory hung between the two parties. After that, a truce was made, for both sides were exhausted by the struggle. The Danes went away from Wessex, and strengthened their position in Mercia and Northumbria, and for some years things were fairly quiet as far as we were concerned. Then, two years ago, in eight hundred and seventy-six, the great Danish leader, Guthrum, attacked us. After some fighting another truce was made, but last year the

Danes rushed on Exeter, and there they were blockaded, and still another agreement was entered into with them. But instead of keeping their word, no sooner did they find themselves free, than they swarmed into Wessex, and our people, worn out by the strife, have given way before them in all directions."

There was a pause for a few moments, and then Godrith asked, "And is it true, what we have heard about the savage doings of these wild folk from over the sea?" The stranger raised his hand, and shook his head sorrowfully.

"Dreadful, dreadful," said he, "they leave the country a desert behind them wherever they move. Villages plundered and burnt, the inhabitants slaughtered or fled, animals killed or driven away, not a living thing remains to tell what a place was like before the Danes arrived."

"I have heard, too," said Godrith, "That they are heathens to a man."

"That is true," returned the stranger, "and if they hold a grudge against any one thing more than another, I believe it is against the Christian religion. Monastery after monastery, church after church have they sacked and burnt, and slain or driven away the clergy. Teachers, knowledge,

books, all are gone. In a year or two we can repair our shattered dwellings, and make new tools, and raise fresh crops, but, oh, how slowly can we make good our losses in higher and greater things.* So clean has learning gone out of the land that very few clergy this side of the Humber can understand the meaning of their own Latin service books, or translate aught out of Latin into English."

The stranger became silent, and his listeners sighed to hear of the desolation which had fallen upon their country, then Godrith spoke again.

"And what next?" said he.

"It is hard to say," replied the stranger, "but I do not believe we shall be beaten in the end. I am certain that our people will take heart again shortly, and that we shall succeed in freeing our land."

"And thou shalt stay with us as long as thou wilt," cried Godrith, "and rest from thy long journeyings and fightings."

"And what, pray, can he do to make his lodging good?" asked sharp-tongued Aldytha, Godrith's wife.

"Why, dame," said the stranger, "I can——." His glance travelled round the place as if wondering

* The conclusion of the paragraph is in the actual words of Alfred himself as they have come down to us.

what share he could take in the labour of that dwelling, when his eye fell on a dusty harp hanging against the further wall, “I can play on the harp to amuse you, at any rate,” he went on, smiling.

“H’m, had you said you could help the good-man in the fields, it would have been more to our purpose,” said Aldytha.

“Nay, good wife,” said Godrith, “a merry stave is something. I love one above all things. But since old Alred, the gleeman, died, and left his harp to me, it hath hung idly there for none of us can handle it.”

While his father was speaking, Osric had run to the wall, and lifted down the harp. He cleaned off the thick of the dust with a handful of rushes and carried it to the stranger, who began to tune and try it in the fashion of one who was master of the art. Then he struck the strings with a firm, sure touch, and the most beautiful music rang through the house. After playing a little, he began to sing, and his full, rich voice blended so perfectly with the strong, sweet notes of the harp that his hearers listened in breathless delight. He sang brave old songs of the great deeds of their forefathers, and, as he sang, the spirits of those present rose again from the sorrow into which the cruel deeds of the Danes had plunged them.

II.

THE KING.

ONE evening, three weeks later, Osric, Hilda, and Asc were coming home once more from the forest, and as they drew near the Great Oak, they found their new friend waiting, as he did every evening, to help them past the awkward place. When the pigs were safely headed into the path towards home, the boy and girl hung on either side of him, and they went, talking, up the slope.

“ Alfred,” said Hilda, “ you will stay with us always, won’t you ? ”

“ Always is a long time, Hilda,” said their friend. “ And besides, we may be called to face the Danes any day.”

“ You have the same name as our great king.” said Osric. “ I thought of it just now when Hilda spoke.”

“ So have many more,” said the tall, young man, laughing, “ Alfred is a very common English name.”

“ And you have often been with the king in the battle ? ” pursued the boy.

“ Often and often,” said he.



ALFRED THE GREAT
Statue by Hamo Thornycroft, R.A.

“Tell us about the king,” said little Hilda. “Is he not brave, and good, and noble?”

Alfred smiled, and laid his hand on her shoulder. “I do not know whether he really deserves so much praise as that,” said he, “but I know enough of him to be sure that he loves his country and his people, and that he desires nothing for himself, and everything for them.”

When they went indoors, they found Aldytha turning over a horse-collar, and fuming to herself. No sooner did they appear than she burst forth : “Well of all the unhandy fellows that ever came about this homestead, I think, stranger, you are the worst.”

“What’s to do now wife?” said Godrith, entering behind them.

“What’s to do?” cried Aldytha. “Why, I gave him some strips of leather and a pack needle to mend this horse-collar, and just look at the botch he has made of it.”

She held up the piece of harness as she spoke, and, in truth, it was a sorry job. Alfred eyed it in good-humoured penitence.

“Indeed, dame,” he said, “It is a poor piece of work, but I never essayed such a task before. I shall do it better next time.”

"Better next time," cried she, "I'll take care you meddle with no like work again here. Such a useless pair of hands as yours I never did see. There's not a single thing at which we set you, but it's the same story. You've no more idea how to set about it than a child, and where you were born and brought up I don't know, but for sure it was in some idle, good-for-nothing place."

"Certainly I had no opportunity of learning how to stitch a horse collar," said Alfred. "It was all done for me, and so, I am but a bungler now."

"Ay, and everything else was done for you I should think," rated Aldytha, "for you're no use in the world for lending a hand to poor work folk."

Suddenly, Godrith held up his forefinger.

"Hist!" he cried. "What is that?"

Everyone stood still and listened. So loudly had Aldytha been giving her opinion of their guest that several riders had cantered up to the door unheard, and there was a clatter of hoofs upon the stones before the house.

In another instant, a face looked in at the window. This was a mere, square hole in the wall, closed at night with a wooden shutter, but the shutter was still hanging back.

"It is he," said the man at the window, and the

door was flung open, and several people entered. All were soldiers, and the foremost was a tall, stately person, richly dressed, the red light of the fire flashing brightly back from his polished armour and ornaments of gold. Never in their lives had the people of Ash Topp seen such a splendid figure, and what was their surprise when they saw this warrior drop upon one knee, and humbly kiss the hand which their ragged guest extended towards him.

“ My dear master,” said the kneeling man, “ We have found you at last.”

“ My good Oswald,” said Alfred, “ How glad I am to see you again ! ”

Full of wonder at the sight of this great Saxon noble, for such his appearance betokened him, kneeling at the feet of their guest, and awed by the stately, commanding air with which the latter looked over the new-comers bending before him, the people of the house retreated to the further side of the room.

This brought them near to the window through which two or three soldiers of lower rank were peeping.

“ Who is he ? ” whispered Godrith to one of them.

“Who is he!” returned the soldier. “Has he been staying here and ye did not know? The King!”

“The King! The King!” murmured Aldytha, trembling. “And I have scolded him up hill and down dale. I might have known he was no common man for he knew nothing of household gear. Last week he let the bread burn, and then——”

“Peace, wife, peace,” said Godrith. “Ye are in no danger. The noble Alfred bears no grudge in his mind for such matters. Here he comes. Kneel to him. Kneel to him.”

“Nay, nay,” said he, “Let Alfred the King sleep yet a while, and be not afraid Godrith and Aldytha to talk freely with Alfred your guest and bungling servant. Now,” he continued, stroking Hilda’s bright hair, “I will read your secret hearts, my hosts, and you shall tell me if I do not read them true. Would not your dearest wish be fulfilled if the *folkland around Ash Topp became

* Much of the land among the Old English was folkland, that is, free to all. But the King and his council of Wise Men—the Witan—could give grants out of this land, to become private property. Such a grant was called bookland, as it was held by book, or deed.

bookland and remained a possession to you and your heirs for ever."

"My gracious lord," said Godrith, "I know not how you have discovered it, but such is the truth."

"It shall be done," said Alfred. "Five hides of land shall be yours. I will undertake the matter myself. And now, I must leave you. There is a chance to make head against the Danes once more, and it must be embraced."

† "Five hides of land!" cried Godrith in wondering delight, "Five hides of land! O happy day! O noble king! Wife, fetch me my thick leatheren jerkin. I will get sword and shield at once, and follow his banner. Shame fall on our house if I strike not a blow for our country and generous master."

Alfred turned to talk again with his followers, while Aldytha, scarcely able to believe her own ears, made ready for her husband's departure.

In a short time the train marched away, and Osric and Hilda, after watching them disappear into the woods ran back to talk over their new fortune

† Five hides of land would be about six hundred acres, and its possession would give its holder the rank of Thane, which was the title for a Saxon nobleman.

with their mother, and to wonder when their father would return.

A week later, Osric left Ash Topp in the morning, mounted on a small, shaggy pony, which bore also two great bags, one on either side, and both well filled with provisions for Godrith. Alfred had formed a camp some distance away, and thither the English were gathering steadily. Osric trotted on through woods and over wide heaths until, about three o'clock in the afternoon, he came upon the outposts of the English camp. The first man whom he met Osric knew very well, for he lived near Ash Topp, and this man conducted the boy to a part of the camp where Godrith was busy fashioning spear handles.

"Ay, ay," said Godrith, as he turned out the contents of the bags. "Here is good fare, indeed. The king would like a bite of this, I'll warrant, for its like hath not been in camp lately."

"Oh, father, can I see the king?" said Osric.
"Do you think he would remember me?"

Godrith laughed, and packed up some of the best of the food, and they went towards the tent which had been pitched for Alfred's use. Outside the tent they saw Alfred and a group of his chief men in deep consultation. As they approached,

Alfred turned and saw them, and smiled, as Godrith made his presentation of food.

“Willingly we will taste your dame’s cookery, Godrith,” said he, “for we make but poor work of it, we men in these woods.”

One of Alfred’s counsellors stepped forward and laid his hand on Osric’s shoulder.

“Here, my liege,” said he, “here is what you need to make your character complete. These strolling harpers have ever a boy with them, to carry their harp, and their wallet. It were well for you to fail in no particular. For if you should be suspected and discovered, what will become of us and our land ? ”

“There is much truth in your words, Clapa,” said Alfred, and he turned to Godrith ; “Will you venture the lad with me, Godrith ? ” said the king. “It will be a perilous errand. I intend to go into the Danish camp to discover their plans as far as possible.”

“The boy is yours, my liege,” replied Godrith. “If he can serve you in any way, I shall be the prouder.”

“But who will answer for the boy ? ” said one of the Thanes in the group. “It is a great trust we are committing to him, the knowledge that his companion is the king.”

“That will I do myself,” said Alfred. “Osric is an old acquaintance, and I know him to be trustworthy.”

Osric’s heart swelled proudly as he listened to this conversation. To accompany the King, to help in a dangerous venture, to take a share in the struggle for freedom now going forward, the idea that he was chosen for the task filled him with pride and delight.

“And what does Osric himself say?” continued Alfred, turning to the boy.

Osric fell upon his knee and caught up two stalks of parched corn from the gift of food. “I will be true to you, O King,” said he, “as long as corn grows in the fields.” And the simplicity and earnestness of his pledge touched them all.

III.

THE DANES.

AN hour later, three figures left the camp and slipped into the woods. First marched Ailred of the Swift Foot, a famous scout, and one who knew every inch of the dangerous country which lay between the Saxon and Danish camps, then came Osric, bearing the King's harp, and lastly Alfred himself.

The Danes were only six miles away, but short as was the distance, the English had no fear of discovery by the foe. For, of that six miles, four were marsh, and swamp, and morass, through which no one could find his way, except the fenn-man who had known the place from boyhood.

On they went, following Ailred, their guide, who led them sometimes by firm meadow, sometimes by swampy paths, where the boggy ground trembled under their feet, until they came to a low hill crowned with a clump of dark brushwood. Ailred turned and pointed to the knot of low trees above them, "From those bushes," said he, "we shall see the Danish camp."

They went quickly and quietly up the slope, and, as they did so, a murmur, which they had heard for some time, thickened and grew into a low, tumultuous sound. They pushed through the under-wood, and looked out over the camp below. By this time evening was falling, and broad and red shone the great watch fires along the Danish lines. The noise of laughing and shouting, talking and singing, rolled up the hill to the listening three.

"I have hit upon a lucky time," said Alfred. "It is clear that they have no thought of a foe or they would not be revelling so gaily. My character will easily bear me out to-night."

The King and Osric now walked slowly down towards the nearest fire, while Ailred remained on the hill.

Osric's heart beat fast as he drew nearer and nearer to the dreadful Danes. Now, he was close enough to see plainly the men around the first fire. What savage, cruel fellows they looked! He drew a deep breath and glanced up at the King, and with that glance his fear departed. Alfred's calm, strong face wore the composed smile of one who is approaching friends. His cool, resolute confidence gave new courage to Osric, and in another moment they stepped into the circle of the

fire-light. The first to catch sight of them was a huge, red-haired Dane, just lifting a horn of ale to his lips. As soon as Alfred saw that they were observed, he took his harp, and swept his hand over the strings.

"A gleeman," cried the Dane, as his fellows turned on hearing the ringing notes of the harp, "By the Hammer of Thor, man, thou art welcome. Come, a song, a song."

Alfred raised his voice and chanted a famous, old Danish song that every man there knew by heart, and, at the sound, other soldiers crowded to the spot, for all loved the music of the gleeman. They kept silence until Alfred ended his lay, and then a great roar of delight burst from the close packed ring.

"Again, again," they shouted. "Sing again, gleeman."

Alfred obeyed, and was in the middle of another song, when the crowd parted, and a tall chief, his round helmet crowned with two eagle's wings wrought in steel, strode among them.

"What means this tumult?" he demanded.

A dozen voices told him, and he bade Alfred continue the song, which had been checked on his appearance, and joined himself in the loud applause which greeted its conclusion.

"Follow me, gleeman," said he to Alfred.
"Thou art no common singer."

The King and Osric followed him to the very heart of the camp where a great tent was pitched, and this the chief entered.

"The men are peaceable enough," he said. "It was a gleeman whose song delighted them, and they were shouting their pleasure."

Alfred stepped forward at once and struck his harp gaily, and sang once more the brave chant which had earned him his welcome in the camp. The chiefs listened to him with equal delight, for music was a passion with them, and the tent rang again with their joyous shouts when he finished. While Alfred sang, Osric, who was standing behind his master looked eagerly on the Danish leaders. They were seated about the place, every one holding in his hand a large horn, hooped with bands of silver, and kept brimming with ale by young men who waited upon them.

In the midst sat Guthrum, a tall, black-bearded man, his eyes shining with pleasure as he waved his hand in time to Alfred's song. Little did he think that, under that humble guise of a wandering gleeman, his great rival sat there, noting every

word of their unguarded speech, noting every weak point of their carelessly ordered camp.

“If they only knew,” thought Osric, and he trembled, not for himself, but for his royal master. Two hours and more they remained in the tent, and Alfred sang many songs. In the intervals, he would pretend to busy himself with his harp, but his ears were wide open all the time and missed nothing. A loud dispute arose between two of the chiefs, each pressing on Guthrum his own idea as to their future movements. Both had drunk deeply, and they waxed furious, shouting their arguments at one another and their leader in loud and still louder tones.

“Silence,” broke in the deep, strong voice of Guthrum, “Ye are both wrong. We shall break up our camp with the earliest daylight and go whither I will.”

The disputants were quieted by this, and soon one of them fell fast asleep. Gradually, the strong ale which had been flowing freely, began to have its effect upon the rest of the party, and they grew drowsy over their horns.

Osric felt himself lightly touched on the shoulder, and saw the King’s finger pointing to the open door of the tent. They went gently out, and

found themselves in the midst of a sleeping camp. The great fires were dying down, and the Danes lay about them in rings, with here and there a careless sentinel, dozing at his post.

They walked slowly through the ranks of the Danish army, stopping now and again, and looking about them, so that any one who saw them thought that the harper and his lad were searching for some warm corner at a camp fire to sleep.

Moving on in this way, they came to the point at which they had entered, and here, for the first time, fortune was against them. A Dane, with his great battle-axe over his shoulder, was marching steadily to and fro, keeping watch and ward. Of all that careless array one had chosen to perform his duty, and he lay in their path.

“Osric,” said the King, softly. “When I give the word, fling the harp down, and run.”

Alfred waited till the sentinel had turned his back on them, and was at the furthest point of his beat, then whispered, “Now,” and they ran for the hill, and the shelter, and Ailred. But, as they flew past the last fire, with its sleeping band, one of the Danes raised his shaggy head and shouted an alarm.

At a flash the sentinel turned, and seeing the

running figures, pursued them instantly. But the fugitives had a good start and were vanishing into the darkness, when the man who had given the alarm, and was the nearest to them, flung a javelin which brought Osric to the ground. The boy was unhurt, for the spear had grazed his side and the point catching in his *jerkin, had borne him to the earth. But before he could rise, the swift-footed Dane, who had thrown the missile, held him by the neck, and up came the sentinel and half-a-dozen others who had been roused by the warning cry. Several of these continued the pursuit after the King, while Osric's captor dragged the boy back to the fire.

"Why," said one, "it is the gleeman's harp-bearer."

"And here is the harp," said another, "flung away on the grass."

"Saxon thieves were they," said the sentinel, and swung up his axe.

Osric saw the bright steel shining over his head and shuddered and closed his eyes, but the man who had caught him, stayed the downfall of the weapon.

* A jerkin was a close fitting jacket.

“ Hold your hand, comrade,” said he. “ He is my property, not yours. And I have a mind to keep him.”

Dragging Osric a little aside, the Dane tied his hands behind his back with a thong of leather. A second thong was used to bind his ankles tightly together, and then the lad was tossed aside on the grass.

As the Dane returned to the fire, the remainder of the party came back, and Osric strained ear and eye to discover how they had fared. To his great joy he found they had been unsuccessful, and he lay back on the grass, caring nothing for his own bonds. Little by little, the fire and the figures around it became more and more indistinct, and tired out with his day’s journeying and adventures, he fell fast asleep.

When he awoke, the morning was breaking, and the camp was a scene of great bustle and confusion. At first, Osric felt utterly bewildered. His wrists and ankles were stiff and sore from the pressure of the thongs, and he could scarcely realize to himself what had happened. But the events of the night before soon came into his mind, and he looked round upon his enemies. No one was taking any notice of him, and the Danes were busy gathering together

their weapons and spoil, and making ready for departure.

Osric began to twist his wrists and work them in the thongs, to try and get a little life back into his numbed hands, but, as he did so, a hope of freedom shot into his mind, for the bands began to loosen and stretch. He wriggled and twisted at them with redoubled vigour, and, with a great wrench, drew one hand free. The thongs slipped away from the other hand at once.

Osric lay quite still, keeping his hands under him to hide the fact that they were unbound, and wondering how he could loose his feet, when an extraordinary tumult arose at the other end of the camp. All the Danes near Osric stood to listen, but only for an instant.

It was the din of battle, and loud and clear came the Ahoi ! of the attacking Saxons, and the fierce war cries of the answering Danes as they sprang to defend their camp.

Everyone grasped battle-axe or spear, and rushed to join the struggle, and, in another moment, Osric was left alone. He sat up and tugged at the bonds fastened round his ankles, but they would not yield. He saw, a short distance away, a dagger dropped by one of the running Danes,

and he crept to it on hands and knees. A single slash freed him, and he jumped up, only to fall down again, for his feet were benumbed.

Five minutes' sharp rubbing remedied this, and then he stood up and looked about him. Not two hundred yards away, a band of Saxons was hurrying down the hill. They had been sent round through the woods to fall on the rear of the Danes, and, with a great shout, they rushed through the camp.

Forty yards from Osric, a beech tree stood on the plain. He ran to it, and climbed nimbly up its smooth, slender trunk. Seating himself astride a branch twenty feet above the ground, he looked out from this point of vantage and safety over the field.

The battle was short and furious. The Danes at first made a desperate resistance. But Alfred had planned his movements too skilfully to leave them a single chance. Half-armed, unarrayed, outwitted at all points, attacked both in front and rear, they broke and fled, streaming over the country in all directions. The victory was complete, and the Saxon standard was soon floating over Guthrum's tent.

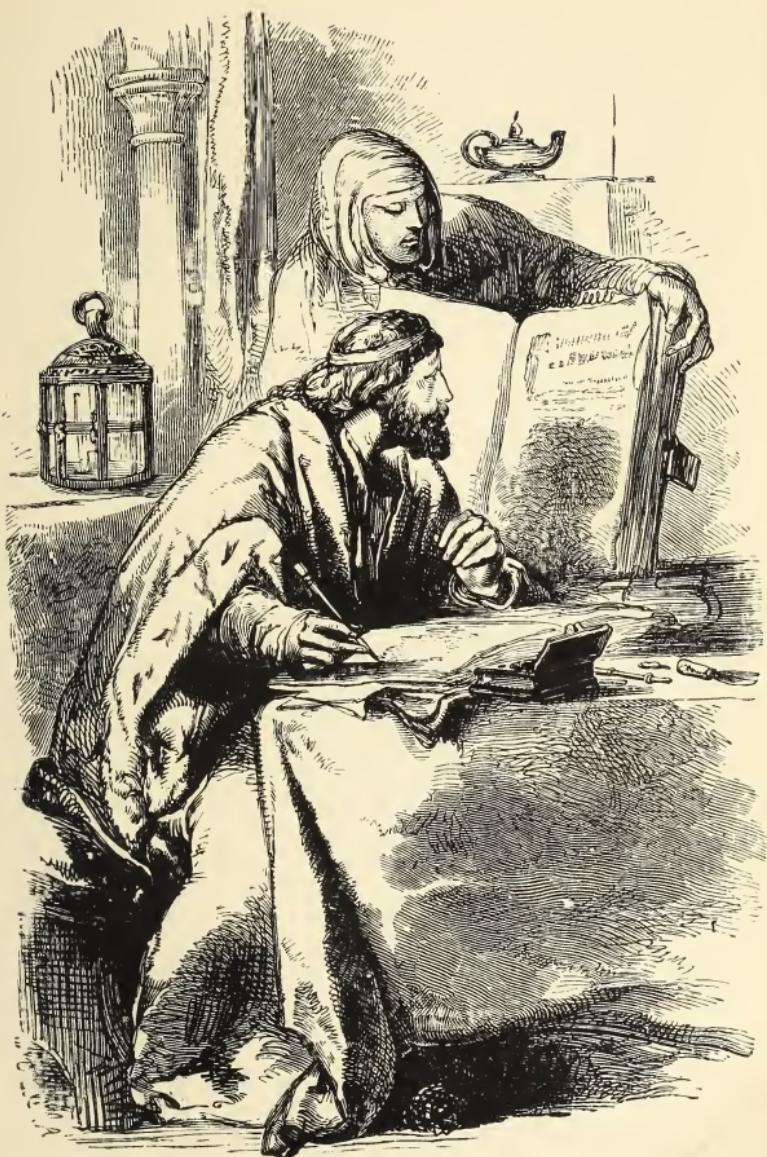
As soon as Osric saw that the camp was in the

possession of his friends, he came down from the tree, and ran to the place where the standard had been pitched. Under its folds stood Alfred, his face bright with the joy of the victor who wins in a good cause, and surrounded by a throng of exulting Saxons.

Among the latter was Godrith, and his joy was redoubled to see his son. As they were talking together, the King came towards them, followed by a band of his Thanes, to whom he was giving earnest instructions in order that the utmost might be made of this advantage. His eye fell upon them, and he smiled, and placed his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Osric," said he, "Glad am I to see thee safe and sound. Thou deservest something in token of our wanderings through this camp last night. Wear this in memory of Alfred."

As he spoke, the King took a large gold ornament, in the shape of a medal, which he wore on his cloak, and fastened it on Osric's breast. Osric kissed his royal master's hand, and Alfred passed on, followed by loud praises, in which none joined more sincerely than Godrith and Osric, for they had known and loved him, not only as a King, but also as a man.



[After this great victory of the English, the Danes begged for peace. Alfred and Guthrum made a treaty, called the Treaty of Wedmore, by which they agreed to divide England between themselves, and Guthrum also agreed to become a Christian. The Danes took the northern and eastern parts of England, Alfred the southern and western. If you take a map, and draw a line from London to Chester you will get a good general idea of how they divided the country. The Danish portion was called the Danelaw, because Danish laws and customs were observed there. This agreement enabled Alfred to turn his attention from fighting to a task which was far dearer to him—the improvement of his country and people. He and his wise men carefully drew up good laws, set the law-courts in order, and saw that justice was done to all. Alfred loved learning himself, and was eager that others should learn also. He invited to his court, men famous for their knowledge, and employed them as teachers. He opened schools, restored churches and monasteries, and encouraged every kind of good work. He translated books from Latin into English for his people to read, and wrote songs himself for them. He did not forget the Danes, indeed, he could not, for now and again fresh bands came to trouble him, but he made a skilful arrangement of his army, and built some ships to meet the Danes on the sea, and so kept them at their distance. Finally, he died in 901 A.D., leaving behind him a great and famous name, of which the English are fond and proud to this day. The reigns of his son Edward (901—925, A.D.) and

of his grandson Athelstan (925—940 A.D.) were filled with fighting. They were mighty warrior-kings and steadily won back the Danelaw. There was now, at last, one king over all England, and, until 978 A.D., the country was ruled firmly by kings of Alfred's line. Then came a king called Ethelred the Unready (unready, here, means unwilling to listen to counsel), a weak, self-willed man and quite unfitted for the task to which he was called, that of facing fresh inroads of the Danes.]



STATUE TO KING ALFRED AT WANTAGE.

ST. BRICE'S DAY.

- I. AN OLD ENGLISH HOME.
 - II. HOW ELGITHA RODE TO UBBESTON.
 - III. HOW ELGITHA FARED AT UBBESTON.
-

I.

AN OLD ENGLISH HOME.

A DULL November day was drawing towards twilight, and the great hall of the old Saxon house of Martlesham seemed empty. But it was not altogether so. A little girl sat near the great fire of oak logs which blazed in the middle of the wide room, its smoke curling in clouds up to the blackened beams of the lofty roof, and pouring through a hole in the ridge. She sat with her chin in her hand, staring into the blaze, and was so intent upon her thoughts, that she scarcely noticed two men who came in at the bottom of the hall, and commenced to bundle together the rushes with which the floor was strewn.

“ Hundewolf,” said one, “ Hast sharpened thy knife ? ”

“Sharpened!” cried Hundewolf, “Ay. I have indeed, and sword, and spear, too. ’Twill be a brave day. I have marked spoil in a dozen places.” The little girl raised her head and listened.

“Gislingham, Pettaugh, and Ubbeston, there are three places, Danes all,” said Anwold, the second man.

“Ubbeston, what of Ubbeston, dost think, Anwold?” said Hundewolf, as if perplexed.

“Every one, man,” cried Anwold. “Old and young, rich and poor, hide, and horn, and hoof.”

“Hist, Anwold,” said Hundewolf, catching sight of his young mistress. Anwold glanced round, and fell silent. Not another word was exchanged, as they carried away the rushes and spread fresh, then they brought in trestles and long boards, and put together a table running right across the wide hall.

The notes of a horn, faint, and sweet, and far, now came to her ear, and Elgitha sprang from her seat and ran to the window. A wide, grassy avenue led to the front of the house, and down this came galloping the hunting train, returning from their day’s sport. In front rode Baldrick of Martlesham, Elgitha’s father, a beautiful falcon

on his wrist, several couples of great, shaggy hounds bounding on either side, and behind, his attendants, bearing a fat buck, some wild fowl, and a blue heron, the spoil of the day.

As Baldrick came near he saw his little daughter's face at the window, and waved a joyous greeting. Elgitha flew down to the door to meet him, and led him to the fire, over which Baldrick stretched his hands. His long cloak he gave to Elgitha, who carried it to the bower room at the further end of the hall.

The removal of his cloak showed that Baldrick was attired in the usual dress of a wealthy man among the Old English. He wore a dark blue woollen tunic of the finest and softest texture, which came to the knee, and was fastened at the throat with a golden brooch. His scarlet stockings were bound crosswise from knee to ankle with strips of leather, and his shoes were pointed and open in front nearly to the toes.

Now that the hunting train had arrived, all was instant bustle and preparation for the evening meal. A cloth was spread over the upper part of the long, clumsy table, but the lower was left bare. Platters of wood and wooden bowls for broth were set along its surface, together with round cakes of

bread, great vessels containing milk and ale, and, at the upper end, a few knives.

Then the cooks began to bring in the steaming joints on huge dishes, beef, and venison, and pork, fish, and fowl, and game, and all the hungry fellows who had followed their master that day by wood, and stream, and pool, eagerly snuffed up the savoury smells and edged little by little towards the board.

Every one had gathered in the hall. The groom came when he had stabled and fed the horses; the falconer came when he had shut up the hawks; the huntsman came from his hounds, and, last of all, and creeping to the bottom place, came the slave, who had spent the day in threshing, or in driving the swine afield, or watching the cattle in the meadow.

At the upper end of the table stood two large chairs for the master and mistress, and these were taken by Baldrick and his daughter, for Elgitha's mother had gone to Fressingham, twenty miles away, to nurse her sick father, and the little girl, to her great pride, had been permitted to take her mother's place.

No sooner had they seated themselves, than their retainers and servants surrounded the board

like magic, dragging up benches and clumsy stools, and some, even blocks of wood, and a tremendous onslaught was made upon the smoking dishes.

When the meal was over, some of the servants began to clear away the table, while those who had finished their duties for the day gathered in lazy content around the great fire.

“Father,” said Elgitha, drawing him away to the bower room, “Why is Hundewolf sharpening his knife and sword? And what is he going to do to the Danes with them?”

“Hundewolf!” said her father in surprise, “the foolish, chattering fellow. What has he been telling you?”

Elgitha told what she had heard, and her father’s brow cleared.

“Oh, well,” said he. “There is some quarrel between the English and the Danes always, and you must not take any notice of what Hundewolf said.”

“Do they quarrel about the money we have to pay to them, the Danegeld?” asked Elgitha.

“You are coming close to it, my little girl,” said Baldrick. “It is like this. More than two hundred years ago, in the time of our famous King Alfred, of whom we talk so much, a great many Danes

came to England and won a large part of the country. Indeed, our good king was obliged to share his land with them. But those Danes have long since settled down quietly, and become a part of our nation. We, ourselves, have some Danish blood in our veins, for my grandmother Gyda, was a pure Dane. Now, about twenty years ago, great bands of Danes came sailing over the sea again to attack our shores. You have heard many times of the dreadful mischief they have done, but luckily, there has been no fighting about Martlesham here. Eleven years ago we fought a dreadful battle at Maldon, but were beaten, and after that, our king, Ethelred, determined to pay the Danes money to go away."

"The Danegeld," said Elgitha.

"That is it," said her father. "When the matter came before the Witan, we had a stormy meeting. Some of us, and I was one, opposed it bitterly, for we saw that if these Danes who were now troubling us went away with their gold, we should soon have a fresh horde clamouring for more. However, we were over-ruled, and the majority of the Witan, led by Archbishop Sigeric, who first thought of the plan, supported the king in carrying out the idea. Since then, that which we feared has come only too

true. Three years afterwards a terrible host landed under Olaf Trygvasson and Sweyn. They attacked London, but were beaten off, and then they marched through the country, doing unspeakable evil. Olaf was bought off by this foolish Danegeld, and Sweyn soon after returned to Denmark to recover the kingdom from which he had been exiled. Since then, smaller bands have constantly been harassing us, and will, as long as we make it profitable to them."

"It is the new Danes, then, who are our enemies, not the old ones?" said Elgitha. Her father laughed.

"That is exactly right," said he, "the new Danes and not the old ones."

"But my aunt, Gunhilda, at Ubbeston, is a new Dane," went on Elgitha, "For she has often told me stories of the land where she lived when she was a little girl, far across the sea."

"Yes," said her father. "There have been some marriages between the English and the later Danes, as in the case of your mother's brother and your aunt Gunhilda. To-morrow, you shall come with me on your pony, and we will go to Ubbeston and fetch her and the two children to Martlesham."

Elgitha clapped her hands for joy, and, until Urfried, the bower woman, came to attend her to bed, never ceased to talk of the morrow's expedition.

II.

HOW ELGITHA RODE TO UBBESTON.

THE next morning, Elgitha's first thought was of the ride to Ubbeston, but, on running out into the great hall, she saw a man all splashed with mud, sitting by the fire, while old Edgar was giving him food, and talking earnestly with him.

"Who is that, Edgar?" she asked, as the old servant passed her.

"It is a messenger, who has been riding all night to bring news to your father," replied Edgar. "He comes from the *Ealdorman."

At this moment Baldrick entered, fully dressed, and ready for instant departure.

"Oh, father," cried Elgitha, running up to him. "Are you going away at once?"

"In five minutes I must be on my road, Elgitha," said Baldrick, stroking her hair, "I must attend upon the Ealdorman at once. The matter admits of no delay. But I shall be back in two days, and then we will ride to Ubbeston. I

*The name Ealdorman—alderman or elderman—at first was given to the leader of a band or tribe. At the time of this story it meant a man to whom the king had given the rule over a province.

have given orders to Edgar about everything, and you will do as he tells you."

"Is something going to happen, father?" said Elgitha. Baldrick laughed.

"What makes you think that, my little girl?" he asked.

"Because you are speaking so seriously and solemnly."

Her father smiled again.

"You are a little witch," he said. "It is true that I have my reasons for bidding you obey the directions I have left with Edgar, but I cannot explain them now."

A trampling of horses, and a clatter of voices at the door showed that Baldrick's men were ready to attend him, and in a few minutes they rode away, their horses' feet brushing off the hoar frost which lay thick on the grass.

Two days passed, and three, and four, but still Baldrick did not return. Then, on the morning of the fifth day, Elgitha came into the hall to find old Edgar storming furiously at a man who stood before him with down-hanging head.

"Lazy rogue," roared Edgar. "Careless knave. Bitter shall be thy punishment for this. Begone!" and the fellow slunk away.

"Oh, Edgar," cried Elgitha, "Has my father come back? And what has Leofwin been doing?"

"No, my little mistress," said Edgar, "your father has not come back. But here is that knave, Leofwin, saying that he has a letter from my master. And when the careless fellow comes to open his pouch, it is empty, and the letter is gone. I'll warrant me it is lying under the bench of some alehouse on the road?"

"And what will you do, Edgar?" asked Elgitha.

"I do not know what to do," returned the old man. "Had but the letter come to my hands, I would have read it like any monk, ay, like any monk," repeated old Edgar proudly, for to read was no small accomplishment in those days, "And done my master's bidding faithfully. But how am I to know now?"

On the second morning after the arrival of Leofwin, without the letter which his master had entrusted to him, Elgitha woke up to find the house unusually quiet. The window of the room in which she slept looked out on the great courtyard, and this, as a rule, was a busy place before daybreak at this time of the year. But she peeped out at a wide, empty space, strangely silent and desolate. There was no sign of Urfried, and

Elgitha dressed herself quickly, and ran to find out what it all meant. The hall was empty, the kitchens, the outbuildings were empty, the place was deserted. What could it mean? Elgitha paused, and listened. She caught the sound of voices, and ran up a flight of steps leading to a small gallery high above the hall. Here she found two women, Urfried and Berwine, looking intently towards the village which lay half-a-mile below, at the foot of the ridge on which Martlesham was built.

"What is the matter, Urfried?" cried Elgitha.
"Where have all the men gone?"

"They have gone to kill the Danes," said Urfried.
"To kill the Danes!" repeated Elgitha. "Why?"
"To be rid of them, I suppose," answered Urfried.
"And a good thing, too. My father and two brothers were killed fighting against them, and the word came lately for every man to take his weapons on the festival of St Brice, and root them out."

"Ay, all of them," chimed in Berwine. "Man, woman, and child. They have troubled us long enough. See!" she continued, "some of our men are coming back. What are they carrying?"

The two women ran swiftly down the steps, and Elgitha followed them.

“Brave pickings!” shouted one of the men, as he approached the door where Urfried and Berwine were standing. “We had the luck to be first in at the house of old Askill, the richest Dane in these parts. Look!” and he displayed his spoil to the greedy eyes of the women.

Elgitha slipped back into the hall, and stood for a moment to think. What was happening to her aunt Gunhilda, and her little cousins at Ubbeston? Her uncle Wulfric had been dead six months, and who would now protect his widow and children?

“That was why father sent the letter,” she thought. “He knew this was coming, and sent to Edgar to fetch aunt Gunhilda, because he would not be back soon enough. I know the way very well. I will go at once. Perhaps I shall be in time, and if I can only get them to Martlesham, they will be safe and no one will dare to touch them here.”

She heard Edgar’s name mentioned, and listened, and found that the old man was doing his best to bring some of the men back to their duty of guarding the house, but with little success. Elgitha ran lightly and swiftly across the courtyard to the stables. Her black pony, Balder, lifted his head and neighed a greeting, and rubbed his soft, dark

muzzle against the shoulder of his little mistress. In five minutes she had saddled him, and led him to the gate of the courtyard.

From this point, a wide path ran along the back of the house and struck into the avenue at some distance below. Elgitha sprang into the saddle, and away went Balder, whinnying with delight to feel the turf beneath his feet, for he had not been out for several days. In a few minutes Elgitha drew near the village. She had not to go entirely through it, for the road to Ubbeston turned away after the first few houses had been passed.

The first place was the forge of Olaf the Dane. As she approached it, Balder snuffed the air and trembled, then reared furiously so that Elgitha had much ado to keep her seat.

What was that dark stain running from the open door of the forge? She knew it for blood, and understood Balder's wild plunge of disgust and rage.

The pony put down his head and dashed forward, and, as they swept by, Elgitha glanced into the forge. There lay Olaf on his face, dreadfully still, his black, grimy hands outstretched and clutching the floor, just as he had fallen. Elgitha

drew the left hand rein and sent Balder along the road to Ubbeston at the top of his speed. What, if some such dreadful sight were to greet her there !

She was now crossing wild moorland, bare and open far to either side of the way, and she had not gone half a mile when she saw a band of men crossing a ridge away to the right, and marching in the direction of Ubbeston.

They saw her also, and waved their swords, and shouted at her, calling on her to stop, and seeing that she galloped steadily on, ran to cut her off. Balder was too swift for them, and when the leading man saw that the pony would pass the nearest point of the road before he could reach it, he stopped running, and fitted an arrow to his bow.

Taking careful aim, he drew the bowstring to his ear, and shot. But his target was moving too quickly, and Elgitha heard the arrow hiss behind her. Others shot also but Balder was going so swiftly that in a few minutes they were far out of range. Still the men continued to shout, and Elgitha glanced over her shoulder. They were standing with their backs to her, and waving their hands as if calling on some one beyond the ridge,

and, even as she looked, she saw two horsemen come into sight, and gallop after her.

Elgitha gave a cry of fear, and encouraged Balder with hand and voice to do his best. She was not afraid for herself. She knew very well that no one would dare to touch her, when they found out who she was, but it was for her aunt and the two little cousins whom she loved so much, that she uttered that cry.

She sat tight down to her saddle, her long hair streaming behind her in the wind, and urged Balder on. The gallant, fiery little fellow answered nobly to the call, and his hoofs beat the hard, clean road with sharp, regular strokes as he stretched out to his fullest gallop. Thus, two miles were covered, and Elgitha glancing back, found that one horseman alone was following her.

The other had drawn rein and his exhausted steed had slowed down to a walk. The road now rose, and Balder gained ground, for the weight he carried was a mere nothing compared to that of the pursuing rider. But on the long down slope which followed, the tall, powerful horse, with its sweeping stride, began to cut down the lead steadily.

"Oh, Balder, Balder," said Elgitha, patting her favourite's neck, "Don't let them catch us."

Balder twitched his ears sharply as if he heard and understood, and held his way with unabated speed. Faster he could not go for he had been doing his utmost since his little mistress first called upon him. His black muzzle was bathed in a snowy foam, shining streaks of which lay across his heaving chest, the sweat was pouring from him in streams, his nostrils opened and closed convulsively as he drew great breaths, yet he continued to bound along like a hare, his big, bright eyes as full of fire as ever, his small, strong shoulders rising and falling regularly under Elgitha.

For another mile they swept along, but the big horse behind was gaining slowly and surely. Now the woods of Ubbeston came in sight, and they flew by a great upright stone which marked the boundaries of the Ubbeston land.

“Two miles by the road from the big stone to the house,” thought Elgitha, her heart sinking. “We can never do it. It’s downhill now, nearly all the way. The big horse will catch us.” Suddenly, she gave a cry of joy. Her little brain was working as nimbly as Balder’s heels, and she saw a chance. Half-a-mile ahead, the road turned to the left and skirted a great bog. As a rule, this bog was impassable for anyone mounted,

but a footpath crossed it, and she resolved to head Balder along the path. Besides, there had been a sharp frost in the night, and that would help her. Certainly, Balder, under her weight, would skim like a bird over places where her pursuer dare not follow.

As she came to the point where the path turned across the bog, she glanced behind. Scarcely fifty yards lay between them, and she could see the man plainly. He was a stranger to her, and so, no one over whom she could have influence. He was crouching down to his horse's mane and flogging madly. The bog was her only chance. To stay on the road meant to be caught within half-a-mile.

Touching the right-hand rein, she turned Balder off the highway, and sent him flying over the crisp turf for the great tuft of rushes which marked the spot where the path entered the marshy flats. The change to the grass was instantly in their favour. Looking back, she saw that the horse was cutting fetlock deep into the soft turf on which Balder left scarcely the imprint of his hoof.

In a minute, she was past the rushes, and Balder was splashing her from head to foot as he dashed

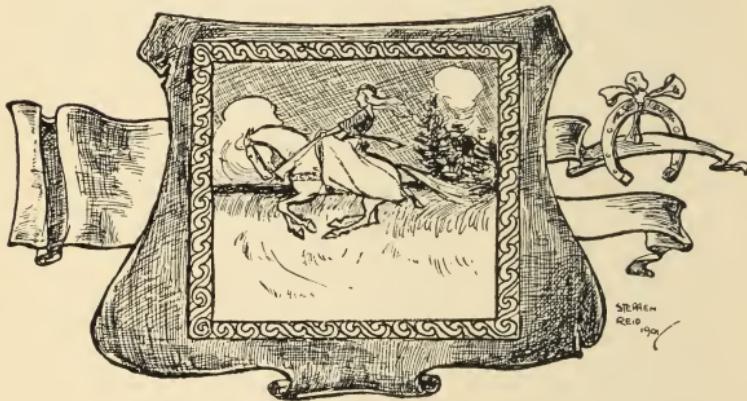
along the swampy path, crashing through the thin ice which the frost of the previous night had left. But still he held his way, galloping steadily forward, and still the pursuer followed.

A hundred yards further, the path ran across a dozen feet of soft, black mud. Foot passengers crossed it by leaping from tuft to tuft of the rushes, and Balder, who had been reared among such places, and knew his way about a bog very well, paused for the first time in his furious gallop. With his nose down, and feeling his way with gentle, careful pawings he trod lightly and delicately across, and, just as he sprang away on the further side, up thundered the great horse.

There was no chance of such a heavy creature picking its way over as the light-footed Balder had done, and its rider, with a shout, drove it to a furious leap, hoping to clear the treacherous patch. But such a feat was beyond its powers. Blown by its great exertions, slipping in the slimy sedge as it rose to the leap, the horse made a gallant effort, but fell a yard short, and, crashing with a mighty splash through the stiffened surface, and sinking to its haunches in the foul, black ooze, was hopelessly bogged.

Elgitha gave a cry of delight. Not only was

her present pursuer disposed of but the band following behind would have a good hour's work to get a big horse like that out of such a desperate plight. Ten minutes' wary riding brought her to the further side of the marsh, and then away they flew again over the turf heading for Ubbeston Woods.



III.

HOW ELGITHA FARED AT UBBESTON.

How eagerly Elgitha bent toward over Balder's neck to peer round the final bend of the path leading to the house. She gave a gasp of relief at what she saw. In front of the house, Wulfketyl, a tall grey-headed old Dane, was standing placidly in the pale, November sunshine, fastening a fresh string to a bow which was tucked under his arm. As Elgitha rode up, he gazed in surprise to see her alone.

"To the house, Wulfketyl," cried Elgitha.
"There is great danger abroad."

The Dane ran before her, and flung the heavy door wide open. Without checking her speed Elgitha galloped straight into the hall, and Wulfketyl swung the door to and shot the heavy bolts home.

"Oh, Aunt," cried the little girl as she sprang from Balder, and rushed to meet the lady coming up the hall, "The most dreadful things are happening. All the Danes are being killed. You must come to Martlesham at once, all of you. I

saw Olaf, the smith, lying dead in his forge," and then she told them of the men marching for Ubbeston.

"I knew it," roared old Wulfketyl, clapping his great hands together. "Did I not say something was being planned against us?"

"And you have come all alone to warn us?" said Gunhilda, clasping her niece tightly for a moment, then hurrying away to prepare for instant flight.

"Elgitha," cried two merry little voices, and her cousins, Ranald and Elfrida, ran to her and clung to her hands. Ranald was a handsome little fellow of five, Elfrida just three, and Elgitha trembled as she thought of the furious band marching for the house, and of Berwine's words, "Man, woman, and child."

By this time, Gunhilda's household had assembled in the hall. They were all Danes, Wulfketyl, and Azer, and Swend, the men, three of her father's house carles who had remained with her, Estrid and Thyra, the women.

"My little mistress," said Wulfketyl to Elgitha, "Is the noble Baldrick himself at home?"

"No," said Elgitha, "or my aunt would not have been left here so long. But Edgar will see

that no one does any harm to my aunt or her people."

"Ay, Edgar," said he, "I had forgotten Edgar. This band of which you speak cannot be here for a while yet, and by that time we will be far in the forest. Let us but once reach the woods and I will undertake to gain Martlesham by such paths that a wolf could hardly follow us."

He had just finished speaking, when a murmur arose without. It speedily grew, and swelled, and Azer, who was watching at one of the windows, uttered a loud cry.

"They are coming, they are here," he said.

"Impossible in so short a time," cried Elgitha.

"It is another band," replied Azer. "They are coming from Pettaugh."

"How many?" asked Wulfketyl.

"A score at least," replied Azer.

The old Dane groaned, and the big, hairy fist which he had clenched, dropped helplessly at his side.

At this instant, Gunhilda hurried down the hall.

There was no need to tell her that their foes had cut them off. Already a rain of deafening blows was being showered upon the stout door. She caught her children to her arms, and stood,

trembling and pale to her lips. Wulfketyl stepped to a small, grated window beside the door, and tried fair speech with them.

"What, my masters!" he cried. "Why this violence? We have done you no harm."

"No harm," roared a dozen voices at him. "No harm, you Danish thief. The Raven has picked the bones of England long enough. It is our turn now, and we have sworn by holy St. Brice to make a clean sweep of you from the land."

"Will you let the women and children go free if myself and my comrades deliver ourselves up unarmed to you?" pleaded Wulfketyl.

"No truce, no bargain with the Danes to-day," shouted the Saxon leader. "Death to the Danes."

His cry was re-echoed by his followers, and again axes and hammers thundered on the door.

"Give me my bow, Azer," cried Wulfketyl, his blood rising. "The Saxons shall see to-day how a Dane can fight for his own."

"Fire," shouted some of the band without. "Bring fire and smoke them out. We shall spend all day at this door."

"No fire," roared the Saxon leader, "the man who brings a torch near shall feel the weight of my axe. What! Give to the fire the spoil now

almost in our grasp. At the door again, I say. It must yield soon."

He spoke but too truly. The upper part was already giving under the tremendous blows laid upon it, and those within could see chinks of light through the thick iron-banded oaken planks.

"No, Wulfketyl," said Elgitha, laying her hand upon his arm, as he drew an arrow from his quiver, "No, you will anger them worse. Open the door and I will speak to them. They will not touch me, I am sure, and, if we wait until the door is beaten down, they will rush madly in and listen to no one."

Wulfketyl bent his grizzled brows upon her and reflected a moment.

"There is a chance in it," he said slowly, "Would you dare?"

"Slip the bolts back and fling the door open," said Elgitha. "They are quiet now."

Azer looked out. "They are coming with a long log," said he. "Seven or eight have hold of it. They will use it as a battering-ram."

"A single stroke of it would let them in now, at any rate," said Wulfketyl, and he gently drew the bolts. The door was flung suddenly back and Elgitha sprang to the entrance. For an

instant the Saxons stood mute in their surprise. Instead of the desperate rush of the Danes, they were confronted by a little girl, with big, shining, steady eyes, who looked over them with an air of command.

"You must go away from here at once," said Elgitha.

None of them knew her, and a great, mocking shout burst from the band. Loudest of all laughed the leader, a big, fierce-looking fellow, with a blood-stained pole-axe over his shoulder. But Elgitha was not cowed. The spirit of her famous ancestor, Baldrick the Berserker, awoke in her bosom, and she faced them undauntedly. One of them fitted an arrow to his bow.

"How dare you point that arrow at me?" she cried, "I am not a Dane. My father is Baldrick of Martlesham."

In her proud confidence in her father's name, Elgitha had seized upon a powerful weapon. If her words had been a spell to turn the assailants into figures of stone, they could not have had a more wonderful effect. The Saxons stood silent and motionless.

"As for you," said Elgitha, shooting her forefinger at the leader, "I know you very well. You

are Edred, the servant of Thurkill, the man who sells horses, and it is about a year now since you brought Balder to Martlesham."

As she spoke, the man recognized her. His fierce look melted into one of terror, his pole-axe trembled in his hands, and he slid to his knees.

"Mercy," he said, and stretched out his hands. A shiver of hesitation passed over the rest of the band, and then they followed his example. For the little maid, standing resolutely before them with pointing forefinger, represented power, great unquestioned power. If she were the daughter of the powerful Thane of Martlesham—and the behaviour of their leader left no doubt upon the point—they knew well, that, if harm came to his daughter the Thane could and would hang up every man of them, for they were of the lower class, and no one would say him nay. Lucky for them, indeed, if he let them off with a death so easy.

So they knelt for pardon. It was a striking change of scene, and those who stood behind Elgitha felt their hearts fill with gratitude and admiration for the dauntless courage which had saved them. A heavy trampling sounded through the wood near at hand, and loud voices, and confused cries, and, from a narrow path, out burst the band from whom

Elgitha had escaped, their numbers largely increased by others who had joined them on the road. The strange sight before the house checked them at once : the hated Danes coolly looking down on a kneeling band of their comrades, and between the two parties, a little girl.

Elgitha scanned the new comers, and lifted her head eagerly.”

“ Hundewolf,” she said, “ Leofric, Anwold, Leo-fwin, Hundeberht,” picking them out one after the other with her finger. “ Come to me at once.”

The tall, stalwart fellows came forward, and stood submissively before their little mistress.

“ How fortunate that you have come,” she cried. “ Now you can march with us and keep Aunt Gunhilda and her people safe as we go to Martlesham. Anwold, send all these others away.”

Anwold, with a grim smile on his face, bade everyone, not of the Martlesham household, to be gone about his business. No second command was needed. In a moment, the open space before the house was empty, save for the men of Martlesham.

“ Lucky for us,” growled Anwold to Hundewolf, as Elgitha disappeared into the house, “ that our little mistress seems to have no idea of our errand here.”



ELGITHA AND THE SAXONS.

"A silent tongue about that," returned his companion, "or some of us will ride *Odin's horse. Baldrick, our master, is a very lion in his wrath, and our little mistress is to him as the apple of his eye."

Azer and Swend brought horses to the front of the house for the women to ride, and next Balder's hoofs rattled on the stones of the hall, as Elgitha cantered through the doorway. Gunhilda, her children, and attendants followed, got to horse at once, and the whole party moved away for Martlesham.

They had passed the Ubbeston boundary-stone, when a body of horsemen came in sight, galloping furiously towards them. The men grasped their weapons, but a single glance at a rider far in front of the main body, satisfied Elgitha. She gave a cry of joy, and dashed forward to meet him.

"It is Baldrick himself," whispered the men.

"What is this dreadful thing, Baldrick?" said Gunhilda, as they came up to the spot where Elgitha and her father were awaiting them.

"It is a black business, Gunhilda," answered the Thane of Martlesham, "and a useless one. To slaughter thousands of peaceful folk, as if that

* This was an expression for being hanged.

would mend affairs, while for every one put to death in England, there are ten savage kinsmen beyond the sea ready to fall upon us. I have ridden thirty miles to-day, anxious to get home, and on the way I have seen more blood spilt than in ten pitched battles."

Gunhilda shuddered.

"We owe our lives entirely to Elgitha," she said, and told what had happened at Ubbeston.

Her father put out his hand and patted Elgitha's shoulder as she rode at his side.

"When I reached home and found that Edgar had not received my message, which chiefly concerned your safety," said he, "I felt sure she had gone to you, and I rode on at once." The house of Martlesham, perched on its commanding ridge, came in sight, and they saw great clouds of smoke rolling up from the village.

"They have fired the houses of the Danes," said Baldrick. "It is everywhere the same. The taste of blood seems to have driven our people mad."

"And have none escaped, Baldrick?" said Gunhilda.

"Very, very few in this part of the country, I fear," replied he gravely. "But you are safe at

any rate, and, I think," he continued, smiling on Elgitha, "there are not many little girls to-day who will be able to say, in after years, that alone they preserved a whole Danish household from destruction on St. Brice's Day."

[The stupid and useless butchery of St. Brice's Day brought about the downfall of the old English line of kings. Sweyn, King of Denmark, whose own sister and brother-in-law had been slain, led over a great army of Danes, thirsting for revenge. For ten years the invaders ravaged the country almost as they pleased. The English, disunited and continually beaten, were thoroughly cowed, and, bit by bit, the Danes conquered the whole country. The Danelaw submitted first, and when in 1013 A.D. Wessex finally gave way, Ethelred fled to Normandy, of which country his wife was a native. Sweyn died in 1014 A.D., and Ethelred returned to contest the crown with Sweyn's son, Canute, but died himself in 1016 A.D. His son, Edmund, who was such a contrast to Ethelred that he was called "Iron-sides" struggled fiercely with Canute, and they fought battle after battle, till at Ashington, in Essex, Edmund was defeated. But Canute had no mind for further fighting, and divided the country between himself and Edmund. In a short time Edmund died, and Canute became sole ruler. He proved a great and wise king and was followed by his two sons, Harold and Hardicanute. Hardicanute died suddenly in 1042 A.D., and the Old English line was restored by placing on the throne Edward, the son of Ethelred the

Unready. Edward, who was called for his piety, the Confessor, had been brought up in Normandy, his mother's home, and was thus filled with Norman ideas. When he came back to rule England he brought a number of Norman friends and followers, the Norman language was spoken freely at the English Court, and Normans were placed in positions of authority. This did not please the English nobles, and the chief of them, Godwin, Earl of Wessex, was banished owing to his opposition to the new comers. At this time, William, Duke of Normandy, paid a visit to England to see Edward the Confessor, who was his cousin, and William afterwards declared that Edward had promised him the crown of England. Such a gift, however, did not lie in Edward's power, for it was the business of the Witan to choose the next king, and so, when Edward the Confessor died in 1066 A.D., leaving no children, the Witan elected Harold, the son of Godwin, to the vacant throne. As soon as William of Normandy heard of this he began to collect a great army to invade England. Harold made ready to resist him, but was disturbed in the midst of his preparations by the news that his brother Tostig, who had been banished from England for his misconduct, had landed in the north of England, accompanied by Harold Hardrada, King of Norway, and a great army, and was ravaging the country. Harold of England marched north at once, and overthrew Hardrada and Tostig at a great battle at Stamford Bridge. But while the English were feasting after the victory, a messenger arrived with the news that William had landed at Pevensey. Harold hurried south at once,

gathering men as he marched, and met William on October 13th, 1066 A.D., at Senlac, near Hastings. Here a terrible battle was fought for the crown of England. The English did their utmost, and the struggle was long and desperate. But the death of Harold, who fell, surrounded by the bravest of his followers, decided the day in favour of the Normans. They had now gained possession of the south-east of England, and they treated the English with great cruelty, robbing and killing right and left, and dividing the possessions of the English nobles and landowners among themselves.]



HAROLD TRYING TO PULL THE ARROW FROM HIS EYE.

From the Bayeux Tapestry.

EXERCISES

CAVE-MEN, CELTS AND ROMAN BRITAIN

Introductory and The Coming of the Romans (pp. ix-33)

1. Describe the appearance of a Cave-man (pp. viii and ix).
2. Why is it that we know so little of the earliest dwellers in our islands ? (pp. ix and x).
3. How do you think the Cave-men managed to kill the larger animals in the forest ? Do these words suggest anything to you : large, sharpened pole; very heavy stone; tree; piece of raw meat near the foot of the tree ? (p. x).
4. What did Cave-men use for binding the arrow-head to the shaft ? (p. x).
5. How do you think people first discovered how to extract metals from ores ? (p. xi).
6. What do you know of the customs of the ancient Britons ? (p. xii).
7. Describe the picture on p. 1. Give an imaginary conversation between the traders and the Britons.
8. Make a list of the nations which at the present time occupy lands which once formed part of the Roman Empire (p. 2).
9. Describe as fully as possible the picture on p. 3. Compare the Roman arches shown with the wattled huts shown in the frontispiece.
10. What is meant by 55 B.C. and A.D. 43 ? How many years have passed since 55 B.C. ?
11. For how many years was Britain under Roman rule ? (p. 2). Newfoundland, our first British colony, was discovered in 1497. How many years ago is this ?

12. What do you know of the Roman rule in Britain ? (p. 2).
13. Describe in detail the picture on page 3.

Feltor and Meneg (pp. 5-53).

14. Describe a home in ancient Britain.
15. What happened at the Council of the Druids ?
16. Give an account of the battle on the seashore. Refer to the Roman standard-bearer.
17. Write about six lines on Julius Cæsar.
18. What does Osweng, the scout, say of the departure of the Romans ?

Sketches, Models, etc.

19. Make a plasticine model of the British helmet and shield shown in the frontispiece.
20. Make sketches of the stone implements (p. x) in your notebook.
21. Copy the chariot shown on p. xii, making it twice the size.
22. What formed the northern boundary of the Roman Empire ? (p. 2).
23. What sea forms the centre of the Roman Empire or the "known world "? (p. 2).
24. Try to find the position of Tyre and Sidon and enter up on map (p. 2).
25. Make a plasticine model of a Roman galley (p. xii).
26. Enter a sketch of a Roman soldier in your notebook (p. 33).



ARRIVAL OF SAXONS BEFORE DESERTED LONDON, ABOUT A.D. 530.

From the painting by A. Forestier in the London Museum. By courtesy of the Keeper.

ANGLES, SAXONS AND JUTES.

The Coming of the South Saxons (pp. 34-62).

1. What do you know of the miners and iron-workers of Andredsweald ?
2. Why were certain warriors called Berserkers ?
3. How did Sermat fire the beacon ?
4. From what districts in Europe did the Angles, Saxons and Jutes come ? (pp. 62-63).
5. Where did they settle ? (p. 262).
6. When and by whom was Christianity introduced into England ? (p. 63).
7. When did the Vikings begin their attacks on the land ? (p. 63).
8. Write about ten lines on King Alfred (p. 63). ST. AUGUSTINE.



CHAIR OF

ST. AUGUSTINE.

VIKINGS, DANES OR NORTHMEN.



SETTLEMENTS OF THE ANGLES,
SAXONS AND JUTES (THE PORTION
LEFT WHITE).

10. Why was Godwin, Earl of Wessex, banished ? (p. 131).
11. When was Harold elected King ? (p. 131).
12. What do you know of the Battle of Stamford Bridge ? (p. 131).

Sketches, Models and Pictures.

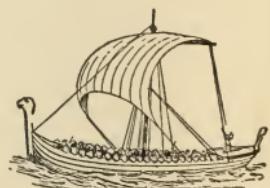
13. How are the Saxon warriors dressed in the picture on p. 261

Alfred and the Danes
(pp. 65-96).

1. Describe the house of Godrith, the swineherd.
2. Copy out Alfred's account of the ravages of the Northmen.
3. Describe the feast of Guthrum.
4. What do you know of the Treaty of Wedmore ? (p. 98).
5. What work was carried on by Alfred after the Treaty of Wedmore ? (p. 98).
6. Say what you know of Ethelred the Unready (p. 99).

St. Brice's Day (pp. 100-130).

7. Describe an old English home.
8. Why was Danegeld unpopular in England ?
9. Write briefly on Canute, Edmund Ironsides, and Edward the Confessor (p. 130).



DANISH WAR GALLEY.

14. Make a plasticine model of the chair of St. Augustine (p. 261).

15. Enter a sketch of the map on p. 262 into your notebooks.

16. Make a plasticine model of a Viking helmet, shield and battle-axe (p. 263).

17. Describe in detail the picture on p. 64.

18. *Time-Lines*.—If a line 1 inch long represented 100 years, what would be the length of a line drawn to represent (a) 250 years; (b) 200 years? What, roughly, would be the length of lines drawn to represent the number of years (a) between the withdrawal of the Romans in A.D. 410 and the death of King Alfred in A.D. 901; and (b) between the death of Alfred and the Battle of Hastings, 1066?



A VIKING.

Dates to Remember.

410 : The Romans withdraw their legions from Britain.

901 : Death of King Alfred.

1066 : Harold is defeated at the Battle of Hastings by William of Normandy.

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